

CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Sir Roden Cutler <i>Derrick Nugawela</i>	1
Some lesser known ethnic communities of Sri Lanka –Part 6 Malayalees <i>Vama Vamdevan</i>	3
Back to the beginning of a Good, Rich personality <i>Kyle Joustra</i>	5
A Tragedy in Paris <i>Tissa Devendra</i>	8
Barefoot Fashion <i>S Pathiravitana</i>	9
New Oriental Hotel Galle –Fort <i>Joe Simpson</i>	11
Tales from the Plantations-Part 1 <i>Brian Parker</i>	15
Roots.. <i>Milton Fernando</i>	16
Synopsis of meetings Melbourne: <i>Shelagh Goonewardene</i>	20
Sydney: Special meeting	21
A few memorable days with Herbert Keuneman <i>Rodney St John</i>	23
Letters to Editor	26
Book Reviews	27

EDITORIAL

Thank you to all those members who called, e-mailed and wrote very kind words of encouragement and appreciation of my first attempt. Among the many bouquets there was one brickbat - which was well deserved. I thank the member who put it into a velvet bag before delivery. Well, they say a person who makes no mistakes, never learns. The Ceylankan has matured, now has a character of its own. One will observe that the majority of contributors to the Journal are not professional writers. By and large it is an amateur production but of an exceptional standard. As the editor I have a responsibility to marshal resources and harness the talent within our membership and make this journal truly a product by its members for a larger audience. Having said that, I have solicited and received articles from non members worthy of publication, and they will be published selectively.

It is said that my predecessor David felt fulfilled editing the journal because it gave him a connection with his distant ancestors in Ceylon. I think that is what this Journal is about. This connection is precious not only for the Sri Lankan born amongst us but also for those who have ancestral links, lived, worked and called it home before leaving its shores.

My appeal for contributions in the last Journal resulted in a torrent of well-composed words on many subjects, most of which have been included in this issue. The fascinating article on the NOH in Galle will be serialised in future issues. It needs to be savoured slowly. Contributors who did not get published in this issue do not lose heart. Your article will go into future issues, so keep writing.



19th Century Images



Sir Arthur Roden Cutler VC CBE KCMG An Officer, Diplomat & Gentleman

by Derrick Nugawela

As dusk set in over the Kandy Lake on Thursday, 21st February, 02, a 'bugle' call from Sydney informed me that Sir Roden had passed away that day. A light of friendship that had spanned over half a century went out.

My first encounter with Sir Roden dates back to 1952, when by chance, I bumped into him at the Galle Face hotel pool where he was exercising. He was an excellent swimmer despite loss of a leg during World War II in Syria. We took to one another like ducks to water! Sir Roden came to Ceylon as High Commissioner for Australia, and left in 1955 for assignments in Karachi, Cairo, and then United Nations, prior to being appointed Governor of NSW Australia. After an illustrious career, he retired to his home in Bellevue Hill, Sydney. A great deal has been written about him and is portrayed in the War Memorial in Canberra.

Continued from page 1

The Cutlers and I developed a strong and tangible friendship. They visited me in my small bungalow at Bridewell Estate, Bogawantalawa, where I was a young planter. This part of the valley fascinated them, and later they rented Gorthie Estate Bungalow, Norwood, on a permanent basis for holidays with their four young sons. Likewise, Allami, the official residence was an abode where the 'Welcome Mat' was always out for me whatever the hour. One never left hungry or thirsty, a great boon as I was then a bachelor. They toured Sri Lanka extensively, enjoying its culture, countryside, and loved its people.

Sir Roden had a distinguished military record and was awarded the Victoria Cross and in 1956 the Order of the British Empire. He rose rapidly in the diplomatic service. His acumen and astute diplomacy gained him international repute particularly at the UN where he radiated humility and strength.

I was fortunate to have been in touch with the Cutler family throughout his life. He was a devoted husband and father, a valued friend, mediator and statesman, whose vision was set on the next generation. I always felt he possessed a tremendous intellectual sensitivity, understanding and vibrancy, together with a strong sense of commitment to his work. The Cutlers had grace, charm and elegance, whether at home or in performing official duties, which he did with a subtle sense of humour.

At that time in Ceylon there were some formidable heads of mission, Sir Cecil Syers and Robin Adair, representing Britain, Philip Crowe (US), Geog Ahrens (Germany). And then there was Lord Soulbury, the Governor, who knew the intricacies of Ceylon's politics and how to hold the peace and preserve the Crown! Our ministers at the time were unique in their own way. The late Sir John Kotelawela, DS & Dudley Senanayake, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, J. R. Jayewardene, Eddie Nugawela, and Monty Jayawickreme, to name a few. In those days there was a great deal

of informal entertainment both by diplomats and our ministers in their respective homes unlike today, where diplomats call at the ministerial offices.

My first visit to Australia was in 1966, and I was a guest of Sir Roden at Govt. House. He had not changed in the ten years since my last contact. The usual warmth, generosity and kindness prevailed. I was able to visit him frequently during my 15 years in Sydney. He participated in every Armistice Day ceremony and Anzac Parade, braving the weather at times. These obligations he fulfilled with joy up to year 2000, despite the impediments to his mobility and health. He never shirked his responsibilities and duty to his country. He served 15 years as Governor, where he earned a reputation as the "Peoples Governor", much loved and still remembered as a man equally at home in the company of Royalty or trade unions.



In the last few years, he lived in an apartment at Edgecliff, overlooking the picturesque Sydney harbour. From here he watched the passage of boats to Manly, where he was born. I saw him each year since my return to Sri Lanka in 1987. The last occasion was in June 2001. He was not in the best of health, but kept us amused about an incident at St. Vincent's Private Hospital where he was warded earlier in the year. This was the Roden Cutler that I was privileged to have known and remember. He was an exceptional person. A man whose integrity was as formidable as his humility was astonishing. It is no wonder that the nation decided to honour this great son of Australia with a state funeral. Finally, I would like to pay my last tribute to this great man who did so much for so many and for so little in return, with the words of Abraham Lincoln:-

"Die when I may, I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where ever I thought a flower would grow."



Some lesser-known Ethnic Communities of Sri Lanka

Part 6

THE MALAYALEES

by Vama Vamadevan.

The Malayalees are referred to colloquially and sometimes derogatorily, as 'Cochchi Minissu'. They are a strong ethnic strand in Sri Lanka population.

But, this fact is hardly recognised and still worse admitted. A close examination of *Ge* names especially of people resident in the Pettah reveals some of these links. The *Ge* name 'achchige' in some names points to the link to the matrilineal tradition in Kerala. There are other names like Chakradhari-ge, Alagakkonara-ge and Kuruppu-ge that point to Kerala links.

The Malayalee influx seeped through the different waves of Indian migration into Sri Lanka. In pre-Vijayan times, the Yakkas in Sri Lanka had their cousins in the hills and jungles of Kerala. In later years, the Gampola dynasties confronted Malayalee settlers long resident in Gampola, wielding considerable power and influence. One was Sena-lankadhikara belonging to the Menon clan from Kerala (*See India & Ceylon History, Society & Culture: M.D. Raghavan, 1964, page 141*). Similarly in Panadura

the Alagakonnars or Alageswaras were of Malayalee descent. Malayalee soldiers are known to have served Mahinda V around 982 A.D. The Malayalees, descendants of the Cheras were renowned for their martial skills and were employed in the service of different Kings. The Kuruppus are supposed to be a section of the Nairs

Malayalee soldiers served King Mahinda V around 982 AD

clan of North Kerala called 'Kurup'.

In the early 1900s more recent migrants from Kerala arrived with the increasing demand for skilled labour. In 1911 there were around 1000 Malayalees, but by 1930 this number had soared to 30,000. This influx was to augment skilled labour sought in the railways, tea, rubber & coconut plantations and also to work as cooks, toddy-tappers, mill hands, port workers etc. At a higher level there were clerks, small traders, owners of eating houses and boutiques. These two categories were all Hindus by religion. At still higher levels there were several graduate teachers who arrived mainly in Jaffna. The Mathais, Vergheses, Chakos, Jacobs, Abrahams, Kurians, Thomas etc. Many in this last category were Syrian Christians and in no small way enriched the educational standards in Jaffna by their devotion to work.



Malayalee Toddy tapper

Kerala is one of the most politicised states in India with one of the first left leaning governments. The arrival in such large numbers of left leaning Malayalees gave a fillip to the Trade union and the left movement in Sri Lanka. The first effective strike to paralyse the country was the railway strike of 1912. The Malayalee workers were a strong motivating factor in this strike and stood shoulder to shoulder with Sinhalese and Tamil workers.

The Malayalee element in the working class was enviously very strong & dominant especially in the railways. So much so, that at the inaugural meeting of 700 workers presided over by Armand de Souza (father of Doric de Souza) the speeches were tri-lingual. C.M.N.Jacob spoke in Malayalam after the Sinhalese and Tamil speeches. K.Nateswara Aiyar and Mr. & Mrs. Satiyawagiswara Iyer provided leadership for the Malayalees to win labour rights.

After the anti-Muslim riots of 1915, antagonism towards Indian Tamil and Malayalees began to mar the working class unity.

The Buddhist revivalist movement around this time added fuel to fire. The worldwide depression of the 1930s and the ensuing chill economic gusts fanned the flames further. The Malaria epidemic of 1934 further reduced economic opportunities and escalated the antagonism towards the Malayalees as interlopers into the labour market.

Even among the criminal fraternity in the Pet-tah, the Malayalees stood out like a sore thumb. In cases of murder they had a style called 'Cochchi-Kuththu'. The wielder of the knife plunged the blade turned upwards into the victim's stomach and ripped upwards disemboweling the victim. When such knifings were reported, the Police narrowed down their search to Malayalee suspects, who invariably were at the handle end of the knife.

The Sinhalese and Tamils feared the Malayalees because of their skills in black magic and charms. Love-lorn lovers sought their intervention to win favour, or destroy rival suitors. Very often the Malayalees were working on both sides – and they were obviously the winners, when large sums of cash changed hands.

With all these negative factors at work, anti-Malayalee sentiments ran high. This is when A. E. Goonasinghe's '*Viraya*' newspaper decided to toss a grenade and carried on a tirade against the Malayalees. It openly showed a loathing normally reserved for a rabid dog. It highlighted that in 1931 out of 3000 daily paid workers in the railways 1700 were Malayalees. This barrage of abuse was unashamedly and openly given vent to, even at the May Day rally, supposed to be the workers solidarity day. Cracks in the relationship turned to fissures, and ultimately chasms.

Most of the Malayalees came as single men leaving their families in Kerala. They were mostly sturdy, robust, strong specimens of the male species. They picked physically well endowed women, to consort with, to the chagrin of the local men. This became another area of envy. The local men attributed the marital success of the Malayalees to black magic and charms. It prompted A.E.Goonesinghe to declare at a public meeting that it was a national disgrace that local women were falling prey to the viles of the Malayalees. Dr. A.P.de Zoysa who preached tolerance and working class unity was dubbed 'Cochchi-Zoysa'.

The Kerala factor in Colombo was so very strong and visible that left wing Kerala politicians such as E.M.S.Namboodiribad and Kamaladevi Chattapodyaya included Colombo in their political itinerary. The Malayalees had their own newspaper published in Malayalam called 'Navasakthi'. The Malayalee vote was much sought after in Colombo Municipal elections and their vote was crucial in swinging the results one way or the other.

Even in the social and cultural spheres their influence was felt. The 'Kathakali' music-dance-drama impacted on Sri Lanka dance forms. A good example is the peacock dance representing the strutting, preening moods & gestures of the peacock as portrayed in Kathakali dance sequences which were introduced into Sri Lanka folk dance.

In the 1940s, the majority of the Malayalees returned to India, while those that remained married Sri Lankan women and were assimilated into the Sri Lankan society.

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ERRATA

In Journal no: 17-page 5 on "Fake Lighthouse" the last word in the final sentence had been devoured by printer gremlins. It should read: **The spot where this lighthouse was built is now known as "Kulunu Kanda"** . Ed

Back to the beginning of a Good , Rich Personality

I have often asked myself the question: “what led to David Goodrich’s involvement with the Ceylon Society of Australia”? Apart from his blood connection with Ceylon, it can also be put down to his sense of adventure, ambassadorial like qualities, and a search to present the truth before all. His application to the Journal as its founding editor was on the one hand like a doctor diagnosing and the other like an engineer applying himself to a construction project. These qualities can in some part be traced to his ancestors and their rich history that David uncovered during his search. His fondness for Ceylon grew with the story of the Prins family: -

The first known to date of the Prins family was CORNELIS¹ PRINS who was born in Holland, little is known about him but time may reveal more. His connection to others of the Prins name is at this stage by no means clear or definite and there appears to be more than one distinct Prins family. But let us look at the evidence.

His son FRANS CORNELIS² PRINS was a Navy master who received a high commendation for his military services. Frans was born in Holland and died 1693 in Colombo. A will dated 1693 currently held in the Jakarta archives verifies this. He married Aletta Schlosser born in Amsterdam. Frans and Aletta had a son - CORNELIS ARNOLDUS³ PRINS born in Colombo and died in Trincomalee. He evidently joined the civil or administrative service and went on to become the Secretary of Justice and Police in Trincomalee. He married Gerda van Hertz. One of the children of Cornelis Arnoldus Prins and Gerda van Hertz was FRANCOIS ALBERTUS⁴ PRINS born 1714 in Trincomalee and died 1779 in Colombo. Albertus was a career soldier enlist-

ing in 1734, reached officer cadre in 1754 as lieutenant, and gained promotion to captain three years later. Between the years of 1764 – 1766 he fought in the Dutch wars with Kandy and is said to have escorted the Pretender to Kandy. By 1767 he was major in the Dutch militia and commandant of Fort, Colombo. On the 15 January 1770 he was Governor Falck's ambassador to the King of Kandy. Albertus was married twice, first to Johanna Cornelia Luyck on 13th February 1742 in Colombo and second time around to Johanna Lydia Zedyewits on 8th October 1769. The second wedding is recorded at the Dutch Reformed Church, Wolvendaal Colombo. Lydia was born in Trincomalee to Michael Zedyewits of Naumburg, Germany and Geertruyda Windouw



Cornelis Arnoldus
Jacobus Prins

One of the issues of his second marriage was CORNELIS ARNOLDUS JACOBUS⁵ PRINS born in 1770, Colombo, and baptized 15 December 1770 at the Dutch Reformed Church, Wolvendaal, and died 7 March 1830 in Colombo. Cornelis Arnoldus married Maria Cornelia Walles daughter of Abraham Walles and Magdalena de Haan on 27 April 1792 in the Dutch Reformed Church, Galle. Maria was born in Galle, Ceylon. Arnoldus subsequently married Gerardina Maria Goldstein daughter of Johannes Goldstein and Sara Henderling on 16 February 1798 in the Dutch Reformed Church Galle. Gerardina was born in Galle and died 17 February 1829 in Colombo.

Cornelis Arnoldus was a historical figure. He was one of the signatories in October 1796 to the Capitulation Treaty to the British in Galle. He acted as Attorney General for the British between 1815 and 1830. He also worked as proctor for paupers & prisoners whilst a proctor at the Supreme Court and the Vice-Admiralty Court.

Superscripts on first appearance of name indicates genealogy sequence –Ed

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

One of the issues of his second marriage to Gerardina Goldstein, was DR JOHANNES DANIEL THEOBALD⁶ PRINS, born 25 February 1804 in Galle and died 27 October 1868



Johannes Daniel Theobald Prins (1804—1868)

in Colombo. Between 1840 – 1845 he was listed as medical attendant, Fiscal Department western province furthermore he was the doctor attached to the gaol. On 4 January 1836 he was a signatory to a letter addressed to Governor Horton, requesting government aid for the Colombo Academy, forerunner to Royal College.

Johannes Daniel married Hendrietta Cornelia on the 30 July 1829 in St Paul's Church, Pettah, Colombo. Nothing is known of her parents Daviot and Jacoba Ferdinands. Hendrietta was born 15 November 1807 in Colombo and died 29 August 1846 also in Colombo.

One of the children of Johannes Daniel Prins and Hendrietta was EDWARD HUSSEY⁷ PRINS who was born 19 August 1842 in Colombo, baptized 2 February 1843, St Paul, Colombo.



Edward Hussey Prins (1842-1901)

His godparents are recorded as being Mrs. I. H. Martensz, Miss Ide, Classina Joceline Sisouw, A. N. Martensz, Dr Edward Frederic Kelaart and Richard Francis Morgan. Edward died on 17 October 1901 in Colombo.

He married Louisa

Mary Dornhorst 27 January 1870 in Christ Church cathedral, Colombo. Mary was the daughter of Fredrick Dornhorst and Johanna Schultze (sister of the well known Frederick Dornhorst 26 April 1849 - 24 April 1926 "Lion of the Ceylon bar"). She was born 18 May 1840 in Trincomalee and died 7 April 1912 in Colombo.

One of the children of Edward Prins and Louisa Dornhorst was AGNES AMELIA OTTOLENE⁸ PRINS who was born 11 February 1876 in Colombo, baptized 23 May 1876, Holy Trinity church, Colombo. Her godparents were John Henricus de Saram, Amelia Caroline de Saram and Agnes Julia Prins. She died 1961 in Auckland, New Zealand. Agnes who was



Agnes Amelia Ottolene "Queenie" Prins (1876-1961)

known as "Queenie" moved with her family in 1914 to England and later in 1932 to New Zealand. Agnes married FREDERICK DETHERIDGE-DAVIES 30 September 1901 in Holy Trinity Church, Colombo. Frederick's parents were Frederick Detheridge-Davies and Charlotte Kelley. Frederick senior was a well-

regarded deep-sea diver / mason and worked as a civil engineer on the 2nd & 3rd extensions of the Colombo breakwater. He was born 24 August 1879 in England, and died 12 December 1912 in Colombo due to a blood hemorrhage and was buried at the General Cemetery, Borella, Colombo.

One of the children of Agnes Prins and Frederick Detheridge-Davies was EDNA AILEEN⁹ DETHERIDGE-DAVIES who was born 9 July 1908 in Colombo and died 16 August 2001 in New Zealand. She married ARTHUR EDWIN GOODRICH February 1933 in New Zealand, son of Arthur Goodrich and

Eleanor Brightmore . He was born 30 October 1905 in London, England, and died 29 November 1969 in Auckland, New Zealand.

One of the children of Edna Detheridge -Davies and Arthur Goodrich was DAVID MICHAEL¹⁰ GOODRICH who was born 12 November 1934 in New Zealand, and died 19 December 2001 in Bilpin, New South Wales, Australia. He married Margaret Rose Taylor on 14 September 1957. David met Helen Harrison 1993 in NSW, Australia.

Biographical sketch

With David's father out at sea Amelia "Queenie" Prins brought up David and his twin sister Joan while his mother worked. I have no doubt that her tales of Ceylon was what kindled his interest that flourished in later life. He was educated at Kings College and completed his HSC in 1952. He started farming but gave it up and decided to become a Chiropractor when he saw his sister Joan overcome some health problems under chiropractic care. In 1955 he headed for the United States won a scholarship at the Palmer College of Chiropractic, Davenport, Iowa. During his period in USA he caught up with many relatives from the Davies side, went to Canada where he met his first wife, had their first child and came back to New Zealand in 1959. Around 1960 David relocated to Ararat Victoria and set up 3 very successful country practices. After 2 years the family moved to Grafton New South Wales and finally in 1968 he established a practice in Parramatta which he continued for a further 31 years before retiring. In David's words: "The last 4 years I have been involved with the Ceylon Society of Australia as a founder member. The group was formed to maintain knowledge of the history, genealogy, and anecdotal morsels about the past of that country, **without** racial, religious, political or confrontational overtones. I offered my services to edit a small newsletter, which has developed into an international Journal. I am very happy with the success of the Journal, the CEYLANKAN, and proud that it was the title suggested by me that was accepted."

Of David we can say he had a wry sense of humor as reflected in his 'Graffiti Toilet'. His sense of fair play, diligent work and straight from the heart approach brought about a unique quality rarely seen today.

With these qualities in mind and illness at hand he faced the reality of the situation and set about to carry out one last task a book called 'A Short History of the Davies Family'. Having a lot of help from Helen, his daughter and to a small part myself he completed this task in doing so it allowed me to know him better and I have taken the liberty of including excerpts for this piece. David leaves behind four children by his first wife Margaret and nine grand children to continue the bloodline, for all its Good and all its Riches.



Edna Aileen
Detheridge-Davies
(1908-2001)

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Note by the author

I knew David since August 1999 and in that short time it was my privilege and enjoyment to have known him. Our interest in Ceylon was a mutual drive. For anyone with further information on the Prins line and those that married into it (male or female) please forward information to myself at kj.genealogy@bigpond.com as I would personally like to continue the search and preserve what David had started.

Kyle Joustra - David's 5th cousin twice removed and friend

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Tragedy in Paris

Story fit for a film

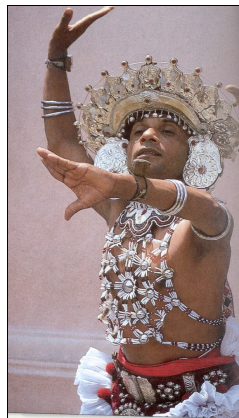
Tissa Devendra in his very absorbing book "**Tales From The Provinces**" relates a fascinating story about Suramba a young Kandyan dancer from Amunugama. This story had been unearthed by Tissa from a Sinhala newspaper 'Sarasavi Sandaresa' in the record room of the Nuwara Eliya kachcheri under the caption A Tragedy in Paris. The story is best told in Tissa's own words

..... Here, glimmering through the turgid phrases of nineteenth century Sinhala journalism shone a riveting cameo of passion, loneliness and revenge--as tragic and enthralling as Bizet's 'Carmen'. The newspaper states the bare facts with restraint, but they throb with emotion so powerful that they yet resonate in memory.

Suramba, a young Kandyan dancer from Amunugama was in a troupe taken to Europe by the great impresario Hagenbeck as an exotic sideshow in his circus of performing elephants, tigers, bears and stranger beasts. For many years Suramba travelled the highways and dusty by-ways of Europe with the circus, dancing his 'vannam' to goggle-eyed spectators. There, amidst the sawdust and tinsel of the big top, he fell in love with a beautiful Spanish gypsy --- Amanda the flamenco dancer. His love was passionately returned, and these two lonely young dancers came to share a caravan and a life together.

As time passed by, the white heat of Suramba's passion gradually dimmed. He be-

gan to be haunted by memories of the thatched huts, the terraced fields glimmering in the twilight, the scent of wood smoke and the harvesters' plaintive chants echoing amidst the green hills of Dumbara. In Paris, as lovers often do, he confessed his yearnings to Amanda. Heartbroken though she was, she said she understood. Both of them were, after all, fellow exiles from sunnier lands trapped in the dingy dreariness of wet canvas, slushy sawdust and sickly animals in the bone-chilling cold of a Parisian winter. She said she understood, and told him he was free to go back to the warm breezes and green hills of his distant home. But understanding did not mean forgiveness.



Kandyan dancer

Suramba's steerage passage was arranged, they bundled his meagre belongings together and the lovers walked arm in arm, one last time, up the pier. A poignant sight -- the lithe brown Suramba with his long black hair in a coarse ill-fitting suit and his supple feet in clumsy boots. Clinging to him the beautiful black-eyed Amanda in her tawdry gypsy finery, her brightness dimmed by tears. Locked in their final, fierce embrace at the foot of the gangway -- she plunged a hidden dagger straight into his heart. She cradled him in her arms and passionately kissed his dying lips while his life's blood ebbed away and his eyes glazed over with a vision of her dark eyes and a dream of the green valleys of Dumbara.

Who can ever say that files and red tape are as dry as dust!

Copies of this book are available from Cedric Foster -
34 First Avenue KEW, VIC 3101 Ph: (03) 9817 3281
Price: \$ 10.00

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## Foreign travel... oh what fun!!



The following "English Language" signs were observed in various overseas travel locations.

### **Car rental brochure, Tokyo:**

When passenger of foot heave in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first but if he still obstacles your passage then tootle him with vigour.

### **Hotel in Acapulco:**

The manager has personally passed all the water served here.

### **On the menu of a Swiss restaurant:**

Our wines leave you nothing to hope for.

### **Hotel brochure, Italy:**

This hotel is renowned for its peace & solitude. In fact crowds from all over the world flock here to enjoy its solitude.

### **Hotel lobby, Bucharest:**

The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret that you will be unbearable.

### **In the lobby of a Moscow hotel, opposite a Russian Orthodox monastery:**

You are welcome to visit the cemetery where famous Russian and Soviet composers, artists and writers are buried daily except Thursday.

### **In a Bangkok temple:**

It is forbidden to enter a woman even a foreigner if dressed as a man

### **Airline ticket office, Copenhagen:**

We take your bags and send them in all directions.

*No wonder, once my baggage did not arrive with me in Colombo, it went to Colombia. Ed*

## The Barefoot Fashion

If you must walk these days then it is best done barefoot. The West seems to be coming round to the idea that bare feet is not a sign of under development or backwardness but is actually a sign of good health.

At the moment of writing there are two anthropologists about the place, not in Ceylon though, a man and a woman, bent on proving to the world that bare feet, contrary to what all our health teachers have told us, lead to clean health. The anthropological couple, the wife is English, have now been through ten countries, including both hot and cold lands, walking barefoot all the way. In Cairo, I gather this from the *Arab Observer*, they were raising eyebrows of Cairo's citizens with the astonishing sight of bare English feet on hot macadam. English feet have, before this, always appeared covered in shoes, socks, stockings, puttees and, of course, jackboots. In the civilising mission that certain Western nations felt called to take upon themselves, they carried the shoe as the standard bearer and emblem of their very civilisation.

One of the first things the natives were instructed to do was to wear shoes. Feet, which had grown in such splendid freedom up to then, were suddenly clamped down upon. Those who complained that the shoe pinched and brought on corns, carbuncles and calluses were told that civilisation demanded that they grin and bear it. It is funny, of course, but the natives have grinned and borne this with such faith and patience that it seems a shame to let them know that the men who taught them to wear shoes are now going about in bare feet. Robert Knox did the same, when he was exiled in Ceylon.

Quite literally, it would seem, the shoe is now on the other foot. All the chiropodists, the

doctors and the anthropologists praise bare feet. *The London Observer* once carried an article by its medical correspondent called MURDER UNDERFOOT, which recommended that English children should be allowed to run about 'as much as possible' barefooted. This same article also knocked out quite a few myths about how shoes 'correct' feet and so on. One myth in particular, which is responsible for a kind of massacre of the innocents' feet, is linked to the theory that young feet need support from shoes. This medical man was strictly of the opinion that young feet do not need 'support' from shoes.

Nature has designed the foot to stand quite a lot of rough wear

Apparently, the shoes are as intolerant of the freedom of the toes as the men who imposed the shoe were with the 'freedom' of the people whom they conquered. The toes need quite a lot of freedom according to the *Observer's* doctor. Like a champion of the rights of the conquered people, he pleads for the freedom of the toes from the tyranny of the shoemakers. He says, 'Good, strong, straight toes, once developed, will prove their weight in gold and will resist the ill-effects of shoes for many years and makes his slogan "Toe health is foot health.'

But, it is the anthropologists' opinions that are really most revealing. The two I have mentioned earlier have already demonstrated that going bare footed have kept them in very good health. In fact, in their attempt to prove what 'underdeveloped' people had always believed, that shoes injure the feet, they discovered that on bare feet they could walk thousands of miles and sleep in caves in temperatures fifteen degrees below zero. The feet, according to the ethnologist Hocart, really don't need protection for the simple reason that nature has designed the foot to stand quite a lot of rough wear. The early Britons, in fact, went about bare footed

unlike their sissy descendents who have to run to the protection of leather and nylon. And it is not usefulness either that has persuaded the British to wear shoes, for, according to Hocart, 'It is impossible to account for the continuous use of shoes on purely utilitarian grounds. They are uncomfortable, deform the foot, cause corns and other troubles, diminish stability, make climbing difficult and dangerous.' The only instance of a utilitarian shoe Hocart knows of, is the skin sandals of the Ceylonese villager, who puts them on when he enters thorny jungle, but discards them the moment he is on

good ground. Shoes have, he says, a more ritualistic function than utilitarianism.

Kings wore them first because ritual demanded that once consecrated the king must not touch earth with bare feet. The custom has spread downwards from that time so much so, a south Indian coolie will not wear boots because he is too humble, but an overseer will submit to the discomfort in order to display his rank.

These are "kingless" times, and if the vast mass of the people wants to be shod, they are only imitating their leaders. What else can they do when they are being wooed on every side and hailed, 'The common man is king.'

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*The Barefoot Fashion by Autolycus is reproduced from the publication Through My Asian Eyes, to be released shortly. Autolycus is the pseudonym of the columnist, Sugathadasa Pathiravitana, whose column, Unconsidered Trifles, appeared in the Daily News from 1958 - 1963. He was Editor of the Ceylon Daily News from 1976 -1977 and The Island from 1993 -1996. Through My Asian Eyes is a selection of articles written under his name and some columns under various pseudonyms. After nearly fifty years of active journalism he is now in retirement, but continues to write as a free lancer.*



# Preserving the spirit of a forgotten world - anecdotal glimpses of the New Oriental Hotel, Galle Fort

by Joe Simpson.

Not long ago while reading a Canadian newspaper article about the restoration of Penang's Eastern & Oriental Hotel, founded in 1885 by the Sarkie brothers, the same Armenian-born Malay Peninsula hoteliers who built Singapore's legendary Raffles Hotel, I felt stirred to begin delving into the history of an even more venerable South Asian hostelry of my past acquaintance – Sri Lanka's New Oriental Hotel.

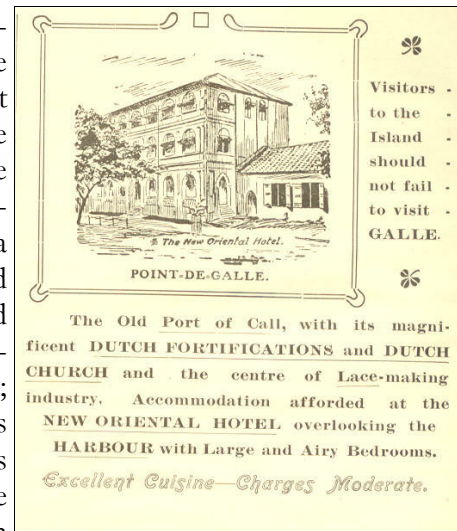
Overlooking Galle's inner harbour from high atop the eastern ramparts of the ancient Dutch Fort, for many casual visitors the "NOH" (as the island's oldest surviving hotel is universally known) is a satisfyingly exotic neo-colonial traveller's haven that positively exudes the sense of a romantic past, standing (like Hemingway's Kilimanjaro) "great, high and unbelievably white in the sun". But for those with a more finely-tuned sense of history and place, and who care to enquire beyond outward appearances, the NOH possesses a more mysterious inner character, facing the world with an enigmatic Mona Lisa-like smile befitting its other role, that of the inscrutable and silently-watchful sentinel warily guarding the secrets of the past. In this article I will present some of the NOH's "outer" history, in the form of scattered anecdotes left by various writers, and perhaps in the process readers will sense a little of the "inner" history as well. This is not an easy task as the NOH still lacks a chronicler such as Maureen Seneviratne, historian of the Mount Lavinia Hotel. Rather, throughout its history the NOH seems to flit in and out of

the peripheral vision like that "ghost ship of my ancestors" evoked so hauntingly by the Dutch Burgher-descended Sri Lankan poet, Jean Arasanayagam.

## The birth of NOH

In, *Galle: As Quiet As Asleep*, long-time Galle resident Norah Roberts informs us that the future NOH began life in the later part of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century as two adjacent Dutch houses, incorporating the Dutch East India Company (VOC) officers' living quarters. Apparently, in 1981 there

was discovered in the hotel vault a large stone plaque displaying a skull and bones and a faded inscription; Norah does not tell us what the inscription



said. An Internet website travelogue states that it was originally built in 1684 for Dutch governors; more likely it housed both the garrison officers and the VOC Commander, as by this date the Dutch seat of government had shifted from Galle to Colombo, finally captured from the Portuguese in 1656. In 1684, the Commander of Galle was one Nicolaas van der Meulen. The lower billiard room of the hotel (now sadly damp and crumbling) bears the date 1686. Galle was always a major Dutch military base, in 1695 Christopher Langan stated that "generally a garrison of 200 men is stationed here". By as early as 1667, as a transshipment port Galle had become second only to Batavia in Java (modern Indonesia) as the VOC's main commercial centre in its Asian dominions. Directly adjoin-

ing the NOH to the north on its Church Street side is the single-storied former Dutch Commissariat store, a relatively modest structure built circa 1656 and since 1986 the home of the Dutch Museum. Like the multi-cultural Dutch colonial society that created them, the NOH and other surviving VOC-era buildings in Galle Fort are not really typical of Holland, but rather combine a mix of European and Asiatic influences. A classic example of this architectural ambivalence is the *Groete Kerk*, the Dutch Reformed Church, standing just south of the NOH on the other side of Middle Street, which was completed in 1754.

### **Into the 19th century**

Let us now move ahead on “fast forward” to the very early 1860s: the Dutch Colony of Ceylon is no more, having surrendered to the British in 1796 and been declared a Crown Colony of His Britannic Majesty on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1802. Nonetheless a sizeable community of Europeanized Burghers, multi-ethnic descendants of the Dutch and other mixed-European settlers from the old VOC days, continued to inhabit Galle and particularly its still-intact Dutch Fort. Many prospered under the British, becoming lawyers, businessmen, police officers, middle-grade government servants and the like. Since the 1840s Galle had been at the southern end of a busy commercial nexus running from Kandy through Colombo, bearing rice and coffee for export in a seemingly endless series of bullock-carts. Old photographs of the time show numerous sailing vessels and steamships at anchor in the inner harbour and waiting their turn outside on the “roads”. A charming 1864 Charles O’Brien lithograph of Galle harbour looking across from Cloisenberg Island towards the Dutch Fort is accompanied by a commentary by the artist. He refers to the P. & O. and other steamers from both east and west converging on Galle, “*which together with numerous ships laden with coal for their use, give the harbour a lively appearance*”. Colombo was yet to become

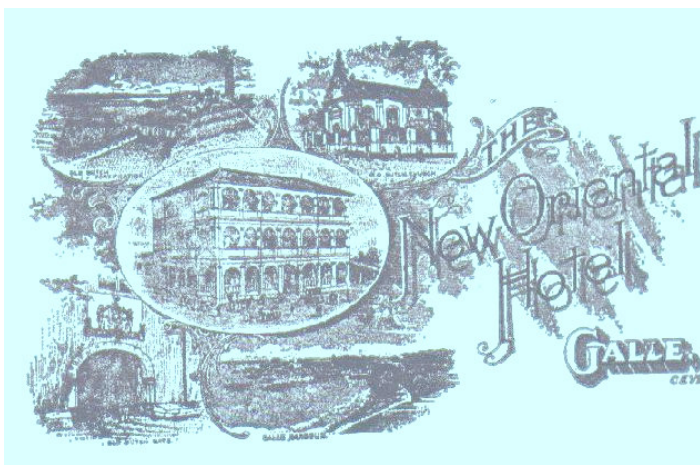
the island’s main shipping port, the coffee plantation-driven economy was booming, and knowledgeable observers like Emerson Tennent could still refer to Galle as a “venerable emporium of foreign trade”. The (nowadays often empty) harbour was then frequently bustling with marine activity, and the (now rather sleepy) narrow streets of the Fort then teemed with “Europeans in white morning dress, chetties with prodigious earrings... Mudaliyars, Muhandirams...with jewelled buttons and rich embroidered belts with swords...women in *comboy* cloths displaying their necklaces, bangles, rings...”.

### **The first live-in manager**

Against this background, a consortium of British businessmen in 1863 acquired the imposing three-storied former Dutch – and latterly British – garrison building standing at the junction of Church and Middle Streets with a commanding view of the harbour, and set up a European-style hostelry that, with a shrewd commercial eye to the taste of Western travellers for the romantically exotic, they christened it The Oriental Hotel. Thomas Munson (Tom) Barker, ably assisted by his wife, became The Oriental Hotel’s first live-in manager. Competition was tough – at this time a dozen or more first-class hotels in Galle Fort and nearby catered to weekly passenger ships and other trade. Clientele could be tough, too – very early in the new hotel’s history, a mob of English seamen from H.M. S. *Bernice* started a full-scale riot in the bar. The Galle native police were unable to cope, and called for a force of 20 European constables to be sent from Colombo as reinforcements; the Governor of the day declined, on the ground that it would take not 20 but 200 men to cope with the crew from one British man-of-war! Apparently in those days it was almost impossible to recruit suitable Europeans for the Galle police force, since the only candidates turned out to be drunken old soldiers and castaway sailors. Since European



constables were considered essential to deal with drunken British sailors, hoteliers in 1860s Galle must sometimes have needed strong nerves! Indeed, Prof. E.F.C. ("Lyn") Ludowyk's childhood memoirs of growing up in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Galle Fort, mentions Galle long before its 1880s eclipse by Colombo as being a "wild and riotous" town, and tales from the older folk of gangs prowling the streets and heavy drinking - "coopers' nights" as they called them - especially when ships were in the harbour and the hotels brimful of foreigners. The local "Galle boys" or "chandiya" (hoodlums) paraded their bravado against strangers after dark through the town. At this time, hard though it is to imagine today, upwards of 700 passengers at a time from distant places like Australia, Europe, British India, the Far East and the Cape of Good Hope were disgorged from visiting ships and thronged the narrow streets of Galle Fort. Contemporary eyewitness accounts tell of heaps of sovereigns pouring into hotel and shop coffers, and passengers sometimes overflowing from the hotels into private homes for a substantial return in gold. Silversmiths, "Galle lace" vendors and Moslem gem dealers did a roaring trade at such times. 1860s Galle was a port of call for mail



boats as well as men-of-war, and was a principal military station for such regiments as the 50<sup>th</sup> Queen's Own, the Ceylon Rifles and the Royal Engineers. Large crowds of apprecia-

tive Galleans would gather on the Fort ramparts to listen to the music of grand bands from visiting warships. A striking old Bourne and Shepherd photograph titled "View in Galle Harbour During the Monsoon, circa 1872" depicts numerous jetties and at least fifteen full-masted vessels at anchor inside the harbour.

### Arrest warrant on commander

Occasionally in the midst of all this commercial hugger-mugger an "international incident" would occur. One such exciting and amusing incident took place in the early 1860s, around the time that the Oriental Hotel opened its doors. As vividly told in some oral reminiscences later published in the July 1952 issue of the Journal of the Dutch Burgher Union (JDBU), the story goes that the Galle Fiscal's office sent an official and some peons aboard a French man-of-war to serve a Court arrest warrant on the Commander. Undaunted by the perplexed Commander's angry insistence that the warrant lacked legality on a French warship (being French sovereign territory), the diligent official sought to arrest his man. The irate Commander with fine Gallic *hauteur* then threatened to blow up the Fort, and to emphasize his point ordered the ship's guns to be trained on the ramparts. Simultaneously, the drums of the ship's band "pealed forth a loud and harrowing rattle, as a precursor of what was to follow". Taken aback and thoroughly alarmed by this unexpected effect of his bureaucratic diligence, the chastened official sensibly chose discretion over valour and followed by the peons, beat a hurried retreat down the ship's ladder, meantime yelling in Sinhala to the boatman to carry them to a part of the harbour furthest away from the Fort! A similar though less highly-dramatized incident took place some two decades later, when the Deputy Fiscal of the time tried to arrest a pas-

senger aboard a French mail steamer against whom a civil warrant had been issued by the Court. The ship's captain refused to comply, the official withdrew ashore, and in due course an Ordinance was passed by the Legislature giving all Messageries Maritime steamers calling at Ceylon ports the status of French territory.

### **English sailor kicked out by local Dandy**

Some years later, in the 1890s, another incident involving an English sailor occurred in the Oriental Hotel's bar. Danny or "Dandy" Perera, the son of the prosperous Simon Perera who in 1889 had bought and renamed as "Closenberg" the ex - P. & O. sea captain's mansion that still overlooks Galle harbour, had gone to the hotel's bar with a group of friends for a quiet drink. Dandy was well nicknamed, as he had a taste for fine clothes and fast horses, drove a smart dogcart and had a small light bulb attached to his horse's head that blinked as he flashed by. Once an English sailor drew a knife in the bar after objecting to the presence of Dandy and his friends. Undaunted, Dandy caught the obnoxious tar by the collar and threw him headlong down the hotel steps on to the street below. The delighted barkeeper promptly annexed the knife and for many years afterwards it was displayed prominently above the bar. Dandy of course became a local hero!

In early November 1889 the Oriental Hotel dining room was the scene of a less violent but no less heated form of resistance. Concerned citizens of Galle gathered at the hotel for a widely reported protest meeting against a Government proposal to do what the French warship commander had failed to accomplish a quarter century before. That is, demolish the ramparts of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Fort in the same way that Colombo's old fortifications had been dismantled in 1869-71. Such a proposal seems incredible today, when the Galle Fort has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage

preservation site! The distinguished scion of Galle Burgherdom, Dr. Peter Daniel Anthonisz, C.M.G., the Colonial Surgeon, led the charge that day. Dr. Anthonisz, a man already beloved by Galleans for his sterling work in the town to combat recurrent plague outbreaks, gave an impassioned but closely-reasoned speech in which he pointed out that (unlike its Colombo equivalent) Galle's Fort was designed not only for military defence, but also to provide shelter against the elements both for occupants' homes against monsoon tidal floods and for ships at anchor in her exposed inner harbour. Empowered by his inspirational rhetoric, those present unanimously resolved "*that the meeting having learned that the military authorities propose to remove the fortifications of Galle, desire[s] to express its conviction that such a measure is calculated to cause great disadvantage and loss to the people*". A typically multi-ethnic committee of 16 was struck, including the Burgher Dr. Anthonisz, leading Muslim O.L.M. Macan Markar, and the Englishman C.P. Hayley, to draw up and present the arguments against demolition. Needless to say, the ramparts (*Deo gratia!*) were preserved for posterity. The grateful citizens of Galle commemorated Dr. Anthonisz' by erecting a clock tower that graces the north end of the Fort to this day.



Galle clock tower

*To be continued in Journal 19*

# Tales from the Plantations – 1

## The Head Kangany

*by Brian Parker*

**T**he majority of planters, like managers of businesses anywhere, often thought that they and they alone were the power behind the efficient and smooth running of the Plantation.

The Head Kangany, if he was doing his job properly was integral to the smooth running of the labour force and despite pressure from the unions to have, what they called an anachronistic and feudal system, done away with the position of Head Kangany still exists on many plantations today.

In the coffee days, plantations needed a very small labour force, perhaps three or four gangs, each headed by a reliable leader or Kangany. However when the crop was ready to be harvested more labourers were needed so the most reliable of the Kanganys was promoted to Head Kangany and sent to India to recruit the required number of workers. So that he only brought back reliable hard workers he was promised a commission for each day the labourer worked. This commission was referred to as head pence.

The Head Kangany would go back to his village, usually around the Trichinapoli or Tinneveli region, and recruit labourers from amongst his family, more distant relations and from people known to him. He might promise some of the heads of these families a Kangany roll and pay them a commission, perhaps a quarter of his commission, termed sub pence. When he had the required number of labourers they would set off for Ceylon and in order to keep the group together as they travelled they would sing out the name of the Plantation they were going to. ( naan poittu

Logie, naan poittu Logie tra la la la...I am going to Logie// etc ) There would be other groups also travelling to different plantations at the same time.

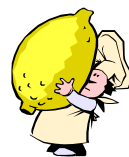
Once the harvesting of the berries was finished the labourers would be paid off and sent back to India leaving just the small resident labour force behind. This system worked well until the coffee blight struck bringing the industry to ruin. The new crop, tea, had to be harvested on 7-10 day cycles. The Head Kangany's recruits now became part of the resident labour force.

One of the first things that young planters were told was that they should never, under any circumstances, get involved in labourer's domestic matters and family disputes. That was the Head Kangany's job, they were he is labourers.

Many of the Head Kanganies consolidated their position by lending their labourers money for weddings or occasional trips back to the coast. It was this feudal binding that the unions objected to and they tried their level best to have the system abolished. It became a practice to promote a good hard-working Head Kangany to a staff position to maintain his labour relations duties.

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Lemonology... beauty tips for ladies.



1. Juice of half a lemon in a glass of warm water taken every morning keeps you slim.
2. A teaspoon of honey added to this will make your voice smooth and sweet.
3. Taken daily, lemon juice guarantees flawless complexion free from acne and pimples.

Anonymous

Roots....

by Milton Fernando

Controversial novelist Salman Rushdie says that the twentieth century was not only the century of the bomb but also the century of the migrant. Rushdie adds that “never before in history have there been so many people who have ended up elsewhere than where they began, whether by choice or by necessity.”

True to what Rushdie says in his novel *Shame*, an inestimable number of Sri Lankans, who have “ended up elsewhere,” are now living in a virtual diaspora. Australia, which has become the haven for a multi-mix of migrants of over 140 nationalities, now nurtures 46,894 people who claim to have “a Sri Lankan origin” (1996 census). Comparatively, a substantial increase from the first federation census of 1901 which counted just 627 persons as “Sri Lankan born”. Fifty-three years later, in the 1954 census, with the first reference to Sri Lankans as an ethnic category there were 1961 Sri Lankan born individuals. Almost three times the number in 1901.

The majority of Sri Lankans, drawn by favourable winds and “pull factors”, set sail from home as economic adventurers looking for greener pastures. A small minority driven by “push factors.” also left Sri Lanka. The Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and Malays of Sri Lankan origin, representing the multi ethnic spectrum of the country, have arrived in Australia in 4 major waves. Dr Siri Gamage in his contribution to “Celebrations- Fifty years of Sri Lanka Australia Connections” enumerates them as pre 1948, 1948-60, 60-70, 70 –80 and thereafter. Whilst lending colour to Australia’s multicultural mosaic they strengthen the Australian economy with their entrepreneurial skills and business acumen. Dr Meena Chavan of the School of Business Industry & Operations Management, University of

Western Sydney in her study of multi-ethnic communities’ contribution to Business, Commerce and Industry affirms the vital contribution made by the Sri Lankan entrepreneur. Dr Siri Gamage records that there are very active sub-groups of Sri Lankans in Australia, especially in the social and cultural spheres, with a significant number of active social and cultural organisation representing these sub-groups, sometimes cutting across language, religious, and ethnic boundaries. In recent times there has been a surfeit of professionals arriving in Australia to enliven the economy, but in the past, they came here as pearlers, merchants and plantation workers.

The story of migration in Australia proves that “*Cingalese*” lived in Australia as early as 1870. According to Pandula Endagama, of the National Museum of Sri Lanka, Louis Hope, a planter of Brisbane had employed a group of Sri Lankan natives from New Caledonia in 1870 on his Ormiston plantation.

“*Also at the top of Cape York and the Torres Straits, Cingalese were working in the pearl fisheries in the 1870s. Endagama estimates that between 1877 and 1879 a total of 700 Cingalese were employed.*” (Dr Wickrema Weerasoria, author of the book “*Links Between Australia & Sri Lanka*”)

Weerasoria quotes from Mr Al Grassby’s book “*Tyranny of Prejudice*”, (pg. 54) wherein it is stated that there was a Ceylonese in the first fleet. Al Grassby, a former Labour Minister of Immigration says “there were twelve nationalities and they included, Englishmen, people from other parts of the UK, and also people from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Poland, **Ceylon** and West Indian blacks among the seamen, soldiers and prisoners.”

Indeed, new evidence is now being unearthed that the presence of a few families from Ceylon go as far back as the 1830s. They are supposed to have come to Australia on aboard the SS Kangaroo. (NSW State records).

Yet the first wave of Sri Lankan carpetbaggers to arrive in Australia was also the most exotic. Perhaps it was the biggest ever, voluntary exodus from the shores of Sri Lanka. This mass migration took place in November 1882. Five hundred Cingalese, that is 485 men and 12 women, arrived in the ports of Mackay and Bundaberg, on the ss Devonshire. They came to work on sugar plantations and pearl fisheries in Thursday Island, Bundaberg or Broome. Endagama, and Stanley Sparkes of Brisbane give the best accounts of the first batch of Sri Lankan carpetbaggers.

Henry Caulfield, who was then working in Ceylon, recruited nearly 600, mostly Sinhalese and some Moors, to work the sugar plantations in Queensland. The exotic human cargo of 275 which included an interpreter –Wilfred Alaric Edema and a physician Dr M A Dharmaratne, landed at Mackay on November 16, 1882. The rest were taken to Bundaberg.

The surnames like de Silva, Perera, and Mendis and the custom of wearing tortoise shell combs in the hair suggest that most were from the maritime regions, such as Galle and Matara. There were also people from Badulla and Sabaragamuwa. The Editor of the *Mackay Mercury*, found “The class of Cingalese who have honoured us with their dangerous presence, there is a great fluency in the use of English language and a competent knowledge of mental arithmetic.”

However, the arrival of the Cingalese was labeled an “invasion”. Opposition was very strong. Bundaberg demonstrations developed into violent scenes. Paul Croucher in his *Buddhism in Australia* records the turbulent events. “Here they were prevented from disembarking and making their way into Bundaberg by a rowdy group of Anti-Coolie Leaguers who pelted them with stones”. What ensued came to be known as the “*Battle of the Burnett*”. Taunts and abuse led to violence.

With Anti-Coolie-Leaguers, churning the chaffs

of hatred Hanson-like, xenophobia was active even then. The *Cingalese* were now forced to settle the situation by themselves. Evidence led in the courts tells the tales. “*In the case against John Perera there was evidence from witnesses including some of the “Cingalese” that Perera had abused one Campbell in Sinhalese “ I will kill you, you... son of a ...” and that he had “pulled out a clasp knife from his coat and attempted to stab Campbell. John Perera was found guilty and sentenced to two months imprisonment”.* (Weerasooria)

Croucher records that when bringing assault charges against an Australian in a Mackay court in 1885, a certain Bastian Appo is reported to have sworn on a ‘Buddhist Bible’. Apparently, the Pirith Potha (Book of Buddhist stanzas). In the case against Babbo Appu, Appu Sepio, Charlis Appu, Jeronis Appu *et al*, the charge was for refusing to work.

Caulfield's recruits were not plantation workers. But an assortment of blacksmiths, barbers, carpenters and cooks collected in haste. They were the wrong people at a wrong place at the wrong time. And the enchantment faded away too soon.

Disenchanted with the “land flowing with milk and honey” many of the 600 early settlers made it back to Ceylon. But a dogged few dared to remain in Thursday Island, Queensland and Broome. Gaynor Evens quotes a poem written by an Australian pearler on the social system of Thursday Island in early 1900s and refers to the presence of “Cingalese”.

***“Pearling lives and pearling thrives there,
Coloured races live and hives there.
White men risk their lives there.
Every race it opens its gates to.
Every country it relates to
Key to Hell and Torres Straits too
What though whites first trod upon it
What though Anglo-Saxons won it!
Chows and Cingalese now run it,
Aided by the wily Jap.”***

One of the business houses run by Punchi Hewa Mendis on Douglas Street, Thursday Island became so well known even after his death, the shop was called the “Mendis Shop.” As the ad in the Pilot of January 1914 reveals, Mendis sold Sri Lankan ware, “ORIENTAL EMBROIDERY WORK” and Buddhist literature through their jewelry shop.

Another jeweler, reputed to be the wealthiest man in Broome in the inter-war years, was probably the best known Sri Lankan, during the time. Both historians and novelists in Australia wrote about *Tudugala Baddlegay Elias* with the same passion the pearly fashioned the baubles. He later changed his name to Thomas Bastian Ellies. Known locally as T B Ellies or just TB, he arrived in Broome in 1888.

Ellies is referred to in Australian books and other publications as the “Sinhalese pearl cleaner with the magic fingers who knew more about pearls than anyone else in the world.” He was often referred to as “the great pearl surgeon” and “the worlds renowned pearl doctor.” Hugh Edwards in his book “Port of Pearls” speaks of “the Sinhalese pearl cleaner who was adept at removing the outer layers of nacre on pearls. They peeled away like the skins on an onion.

Ian Idriess who wrote prolifically on the Australian out-back, documents Ellies’s encounter with a famous London jeweler in the West Australian classic, “Forty Fathoms Deep”. Ellies processed some of the world’s most expensive pearls. One was the famous “Star of West”, the other was the “Southern Cross” which the Roman Catholics of England presented to the Pope. It is now exhibited in the Vatican. TB, a strict Buddhist had in his home, a little altar where at times he chanted prayers from his “Sanskrit Bible”.

With an utterly unassuming business style and entrepreneurship he rendered remarkable service to his country of adoption. When he returned to his motherland in 1917, he financed the building of a

Buddhist Temple in Bope, Galle in memory of his parents.

Peter Warnakulasuriya of Thursday Island was another Sinhalese entrepreneur of the time. He had a surname, which the Australians could not get around their tongue. To help them he, coined a name easy to call. He changed it to “Water-Coolers”.

Some of the others qualifying as “first fleeters” are, Simon the “Cingalese” coxwain who was reputed to be the oldest man on Thursday Island, Yahatowgoda Baddlegay Sarnealis, Abraham Weeraratne Jayasuriya of Ingham, Queensland, Don Charles Attygalle who wended his way to Bendigo, and Simon Samarasinghe of Queanbeyan who looms large in Bruce Moores “The Lanyon Saga”. They have left a lineage we lesser mortals should be proud to emulate.

We are now in the process of discovering earlier connections and charting early episodes. Reportedly, the Babans of Bullcreek, West Australia are trying to figure out whether they came from Balapitiya or Bambalapitiya and still looking for their “roots”.

ΩΩΩΩ

Milton Fernando - teacher, writer, broadcaster and who served at the National Dictionary Centre of the ANU, Canberra now lives in retirement in Sydney. He has just released “*Satkulu Panwa Matbin*” an anthology of Indian short stories translated into Sinhalese.



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 26. *Our war Nurses, The Australian War Memorial Library*

Penguin Books Australia Ltd.

Both Noel, who has published short articles in THE CEYLANKAN, and his book, which has been extensively discussed in this journal are very well known to our members. His book makes a useful addition to the numerous works of postcolonial history that are now available. He said that even after thirty years research on the subject, he still feels there are unanswered questions and unclear motivation about certain actions taken by the main protagonists of this drama of a little known mutiny of World War II.

The severe sentence passed on those who mutinied appears tragically unsound from the contemporary perspective. He said that court martial decisions now take shell shock, stress etc. into consideration whereas in earlier times a court martial was conducted according to the strict letter of military law.

Dr Srilal Fernando introduced Noel to the audience as a broadcaster, journalist and puppeteer, and Noel demonstrated the last of these skills in a delightful style having a lively exchange with a puppet by way of introduction to his subject.



Dr Chandani Lokuge, (*pictured right*) who lectures in English at the School of Literary, Visual and Performance Studies at Monash University, transported her listeners back to Sri Lanka by reading extracts from her novel which described some of the experiences of her characters when they returned to their homeland.

She spoke of Manthri, the mother in her story, who clings to the past and refuses to acknowledge the changes in her mother country or the need to positively accept her new country, as it is. As a result she is stranded in the past as a country and becomes destructive towards her family, tragically mishandling her children's needs by refusing to understand them, thereby driving them into life choices which they would not otherwise have made.

"If the Moon Smiled" is a story of migration as well as tracing the parallel story of the dominant character, Manthri.

Synopsis of meetings

Melbourne 10th February 2002

This meeting featured two contrasting speakers and subjects. Noel Crusz made a presentation on his book *"The Cocos Island Mutiny"* which dealt with military and social history, while Dr Chandani Lokuge gave us insights into her creative work of fiction *"If the Moon Smiled"* which portrayed the life of a Sri Lankan migrant family in Australia. Fremantle Arts Centre Press published Noel's book in 2001, while Chandani's book was published in 2000 by

Chandani said that after publication and reading the reviews and assessments made of the novel she realised that her work belonged to the genre of postcolonial and diasporic fiction, along with Salman Rushdie. She spoke of the many ways people have reacted to migration, some with complete acceptance, others with rejection of their new environment. Some took elements from both their new and old countries to shape their lives and still others floated above both countries and developed their individuality to the point where they transcended the need to belong to either. She touched on questions of roots and identity in the discussion that followed.

The audience was also privileged to hear an extract from the current novel on which she is working. It promises to be compelling and complex, and we look forward to its publication.

Dr Fernando invited Mrs Tirzah Crusz to draw the winning number for the raffle, which was won by Eva Mudalige. 56 people were present at the meeting and many new and old books were on display. Some, including the books featured in the presentations of the speakers were available for sale.

Melbourne 7th April 2002

The Chairman, Dr Srilal Fernando accorded a special welcome to the Society's President, Hugh Karunanayake, who together with his wife Tulsi, were in the audience. Another visitor from Sydney, Dr M.B. Kappagoda and his wife Dr Nalini, were also welcomed.

In introducing the speaker Dr Lakshman Ranasinghe whose subject was "The Oxford English Dictionary and a few Doctors"; he referred to other well-known doctors of medicine such as Dr S. R. Kottegoda and Dr Earle de Fonseka, among others, who had distinguished themselves in different disciplines. Dr Ranasinghe was a former President of the Sri Lanka Medical Association, a past President of the Ceylon College of Physicians and the founder President of the Sri Lanka Association of Dermatologists. For 10 years, he was Co Editor of the Ceylon Medical Journal.

The speaker began his presentation with a short

history of the English language – a language that has been spoken for fourteen centuries. He dwelt on the nuances and eccentricities of Old and Middle English until the time of Chaucer when the likeness of the modern language took form. Early Modern English evolved by the middle of the 15th century, and it was only by the end of the 18th century that the language, understandable today, emerged. He defined modern English as a delectable etymological pickle incorporating Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian into Anglo - Saxon and Celtic, spiced by Asian (Indo - Aryan, Dravidian) and other Oriental languages.

He then went on to the saga of the Oxford English dictionary describing the contribution to this important work by its two founders, Dr W. C. Minor and Dr James Murray. Dr Murray was the Editor of the Philological Society's project, the New English Dictionary, and in 1879 published an appeal by pamphlet calling for contributors to send in lists of words.

Dr. Minor, who was at that time an inmate of the mental asylum at Broadmoor, took up the appeal. American born, nurtured and educated in Jaffna (Ceylon) until the age of 14, he not only spoke Sinhala and Tamil with ease but also knew Hindi, Burmese and Chinese. He went to back to America where

The main contributor Dr Minor, lived and was educated in Jaffna till his 14th year. He not only spoke Sinhala & Tamil with ease but knew Hindi, Burmese and Cantonese

he qualified as a surgeon and served in the Union army

during the civil war. He migrated to England where he killed a man in 1872 and was committed to Broadmoor mental asylum. He remained there until 1910. While at the asylum, where he had his own formidable library, he responded to Murray's appeal for philological contributions and submitted his first list of entries in 1883. With thirty years of concentrated effort behind him, he became the most significant contributor to the New English Dictionary published in 1928. Dr. Ranasinghe traced its evolution to the Oxford English Dictionary from 1972 to 1986.

In 1993 Dr Ranasinghe started corresponding with Dr Edmund Weiner, principal Philologist of

the Oxford English Dictionary about the words of Sinhala origin it contained. He was encouraged in this by Dr David Warrell, Professor of Medicine at the Nuffield Department of Clinical Medicine at Oxford University and joint editor of the Oxford Textbook of Medicine, who was a personal friend of over thirty years standing. In 1997 Dr Warrell had sent him a list of forty-one Sinhala and Tamil words which appear in the OED. Dr Ranasinghe, in going through the list is convinced that it is actually forty-four words. His queries to Dr Warrell were referred to Dr Weiner and his correspondence with the latter since 1999 is continuing with the objective of correcting the spelling and pronunciation of Sinhala words appearing in the dictionary.

He has made several submissions derived from Sinhala, Sanskrit and Malayalam words, which he feels, merit inclusion in the dictionary. This is in response to public appeals for “new/old” words, which have been made by the editors of the OED in July 1999. The words he has submitted make an interesting subject for discussion. Among them are ola, kali-yugaya, lakshmi, Sri Mahabodhi, Vesak, Mahavamsa and seer (fish). In the case of ‘seer’ he feels that the correct spelling should be ‘sier’ in consideration of its Spanish derivation from *sierra*.

During his research, Dr. Ranasinghe discovered that Sir Mornier Williams published his Dictionary of English and Sanskrit in 1851, and his 1333 - page Sanskrit - English Dictionary in 1899 predating the forerunner of the OED published in 1928.

Dr Ranasinghe’s presentation was detailed, academic and stimulating. In examining the science and art of language he drew attention to the cross fertilisation of languages. One speculative trend of thought arises: what are the other languages spoken in the former British colonies that have contributed words to the English language and conversely, which languages from colonial times have gifted words to the Sinhala language? Portuguese certainly did, but did Dutch and English do the same?

Dr Fernando called upon Mrs Lakshmi Ranasinghe to draw the winning number in the raffle and Dr Sarath Gunatunga was the lucky winner. 50 people attended the meeting.

Shelagh Goonewardene

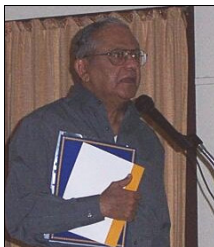
Sydney 21st April 2002

President Hugh Karunanyake introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Dr Lakshman Ranasinghe, who he said was already well known to the Sydney members from his address last year on the subject of Ancient Health Facilities of Sri Lanka. He alluded to diverse subjects in which Dr Ranasinghe has a scholarly interest apart from medicine, particularly his involvement in submission of oriental words to the Oxford English Dictionary Philologists. But the subject at this meeting is, “**The Ayurvedic Roots and Shoots of Dermatology**”. Dr Ranasinghe delivered a very absorbing lecture spiced with humorous anecdotes and illustrated by a slide show where the slide projector seemed to have a mind of its own—going back when required to advance and vice versa. With good humour and patience, Dr Ranasinghe held the audience attention and engaged in a vigorous question and answer session at the end. Forty nine members attended the meeting and the customary end of evening raffle was won by none other than our visiting lecturer Dr Ranasinghe. He was “spiritually” richer courtesy of Mr Johnny Walker.

Here is a synopsis of his talk:

Historians mention Ravana, King of Lanka around 2000 B.C., and sage Pulasti as the earliest known Lankan physicians. Ravana committed into text many compositions and guidelines relating to medical theory and practice. He also authored a paediatric text. Aboriginal Veddha's used incantation and rituals to appease devils that afflicted the mind and body with disease, applied bark and leaves to wounds and python fat to heal fractures. Exorcism was practised well into the 20th century. After the 5th century B.C. Aryan immigrants introduced "regional medical practice", - and the tradition of hereditary medical practice took root. Buddhism was established in Lanka in the 3rd Century B.C. - and its beneficent influence was mediated through the recitation of stanzas (sutra) as a complementary modality to medical practice. Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara (Mahayana) was the guardian deity for health and well - being and his munificence particularly attended to relieve skin diseases. The inevitable outcome was the establishment of Ayurveda (the science of life). The Mahavamsa, committed to writing in the 6th century A.D., makes the earliest known references to skin diseases. The Chulavamsa recorded that King Buddhadasa, in the 4th century,

authored the *Sararta Sangraha* at a time when leprosy was just one of the many poorly defined severe and chronic skin diseases. "Society in Mediaeval Ceylon" of M.B.Ariyapala (1956) has accounts of the 13th century *Saddharma Ratanavaliya* which described methods of therapy practised then, including the use of medicinal oils and herbs. A dog with itch was treated with the juice of the piper betel. It also referred to elephantiasis. Pandit R.R.Pathak's "Therapeutic Guide to Ayurvedic Medicine", written in 1970, is based on ancient Sanskrit ayurvedic texts, and has a 25 - page chapter on skin diseases (*Trak - Vikara*), - which lists 36 specific diagnoses headed by eczema (the commonest), and followed by dandruff, ringworm, scabies, prickly heat, psoriasis, lecoderma, urticaria, shingles, acne, moles, "leprosy", alopecia etc. Aetiologically, all diseases resulted from disturbance in one, two or all of the three bodily humours, - *vata* (wind), *pita* (bile), and *sema* (*phlegm*). All skin diseases fell into 7 *maha-kushta* and 11 *kshudra-kushta* categories. There were 7 aetiological bases for these. Clinical terms included macule and papule and constituted descriptions that are as relevant in modern dermatology. There were prophylactics to improve skin care and health. The basic theory was that the causative humours needed treatment at the same time as the manifestations. There were many modalities and substances for oral and topical use. In ancient Tibet the monks practised medicine, and this tradition continued in Lanka.



Dr Lakshman
Ranasinghe in
Sydney



Medicinal bath
(circa 9th century A.D)

In 1806 H.C.P Bell discovered a rectangular granite receptacle which was skilfully scooped, as in canoe making, (see illustration left -Ed) in order to precisely accommodate the supine human that would be subjected to immersion therapy. In the extant 9th century monastic hospital at Mihintale such an oil - bath (*thel - oruwa*) is

exhibited, which was used for up to 13 categories of fomentation to treat disorders of mainly *vata*. Herbs, milk, oil, ghee, essence of meat, vinegar and hot water were used in these *droni* or baths. For skin diseases the great Indian physician Susruta used **Acacia catechu**. The *Samantapasadika* (before the 5th century), and from the 13th to 16th centuries, - *Yogarnavaya*, *Prayoga Ratanavaliya*, *Yogaratanakaraya* and the *Varayogasaraya*, - recommended immersion therapy.

The Portuguese realised the effectiveness of Ayurvedic medicine and used **Aegle marmelos** (*Beli* fruit) to treat bloody infectious diarrhoea, and **Rauwolfia serpentina** (*Ekaveriya*) for snake bite, while ayurveda treated high blood pressure and anxiety with it. During the Dutch (colonial) period in Ceylon the leprosy hospital was opened in Hendala in 1708, - an "offshoot" of the Buddhist concept of hospitals, and catered for the most dreaded disease mentioned in the Mahavamsa and the Bible. The leprosy asylum in Mantivu was opened around 1923. Patients with leprosy are no longer admitted for hospital treatment, - unless complications necessitated it. Thus has been the evolution of allopathy, - from Ayurvedic roots to modern and scientific shoots, and evidence - based medicine.

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RECIPE CORNER

LIME PICKLE CHUTNEY



2 or 3 pickled limes
3 cups brown vinegar
1 large red onion finely chopped
3 fresh green and/or red chillies finely chopped
Sugar & salt to taste
Dried red chillies crushed or powdered- (Optional)

Soak limes in vinegar with some of the juices from the lime pickle, for couple of hours. Finely chop or crush limes almost to a paste and return to vinegar. Mix all the other ingredients including salt and sugar to taste. The resulting chutney goes well with biryani, plain, fried, or savoury rice.

Courtesy: Rita Pereira, Hampton Park, Victoria.

A few memorable days with Herbert Keuneman

by Rodney St John

For those of us who enjoy the Christmas season, there is a rather repetitive pattern, which invariably happens. Having fulfilled our religious devotions, the mood is one of eating, drinking, merry making, visiting friends, receiving and giving gifts, sending out many Christmas cards and generally having a good time. I was very fortunate therefore to have a unique experience, many years ago. For this I will always remember the late Herbert Keuneman and his wife Doreen.

In December 1961 my friend Winston Rodrigo who was on the editorial staff of the Times of Ceylon, invited me to join him on a trip. We were both from Dehiwela and we studied together at the same school. Winston had met with and befriended Herbert who at that time was writing a series of articles on the places he visited. At that particular time he was writing the series titled "Scenes of Ehetuwewa" As he was coordinating with Winston he had very kindly invited him and at Winston's request me too. That was typical of Herbert. He had been an Anglican Vicar who had given up his vocation and retreated to the peace and quiet of the country. He did not however gather any moss and moved around to places that caught his fancy. Once located, he delved into its history and geography and presented to his readers a series, which was fascinating. Previously he had lived in Fort Hammenhiel, which began as a small fortification off the Jaffna peninsula under the Portuguese and was improved after capture by the Dutch. From here too he wrote a series of articles. I often wonder why all of his writings



Herbert
Keuneman

have not been published, they surely will be treasured.

Ehetuwewa was then a little village located about 10 kms south east of Galgamuwa, in the Kurunegala District and about 8 kms from the rail track to Trincomalee. The closest station was Morogollagama whilst Maho was the junction station, further south. We arrived there on the 18th after a relaxed drive in my trusty Austin A35, the distance from Colombo being about 200 kms. We were greeted like old friends and made to feel at home. Herbert had that the knack and charm for that and Doreen was as friendly. The couple had initially leased out an old circuit bungalow which they later purchased and made their permanent home. Bandara and Dingiri Amma from the village were a husband and wife team that assisted the Keunemans. I cannot recall a single occasion when Herbert addressed us by our names, using instead that warm sinhala word " Putha"(son).

That evening, we sat out in the garden, as we did regularly. There was something special in the setting, and ideally suited to relax and listen to Herbert in full flight. Here was the master raconteur, holding forth on a variety of topics full of spicy anecdotes. He even reminisced about his years as a teacher at Richmond College, Galle, in the early 1930's, his involvement in the school's drama activities and the playlets he produced. They were no doubt, very interesting years in his life. He was very authoritative about classical music and would explain its intricacies, humming and waving his hands to emphasise his meaning. We were happy to listen and appreciate his extensive knowledge, both educative and entertaining. Herbert had such an extensive repertoire that it was easy to understand why his writing was as captivating. Those evenings with Herbert still live in my memory. He also stated that he had something on his mind and he would tell us about it the next day.

On the 19th, he surprised us by stating that he planned a Christmas tree for the younger children of the entire village. For a moment we were taken aback. He explained that all he wanted from us were some small gifts (he gave us some idea what he thought would be appropriate) as many as we were prepared to donate, with the proviso that they should be wrapped and ready by the 22nd. He had fixed the date for the occasion as the 23rd mainly because we were leaving on the 24th. So it was that in between our visits to Aukana, Sesseruwa, Yapahuwa, the Nagala Vihare etc we also went to Maho and purchased some gifts. We were only too glad to join in the spirit of Herbert's plan, even though we still did not really envisage how it was going to work out. His only other request was that we keep the afternoon of the 23rd free.

On the eventful day Herbert called us out to the garden and under a wide spreading mango tree we observed the gifts piled into some boxes. So this was to be the Christmas tree! The gifts were numbered and under his direction we hung them from the branches of the tree in retrievable order. We next hung cellophane lanterns from the branches and also on the trees around the mango tree and lit them. Around 5.00 p.m. the village folk began arriving and Herbert delegated a senior member to organise the people around the tree. Packets of biscuits were passed around. The four of us were located directly under the tree and carried a small torch each. Herbert spoke briefly in Sinhala and told them that they were here to join in the spirit of Christmas and it did not matter whether they were Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims or any other. He said that we had a little gift for children less than 12 years of age and they should come up and receive it when their names were called. I still cannot fathom how Herbert had compiled the list of names which he had, I can only think that he had the help of the Headman. So it was that as Herbert read out the names, Winston and I took the gifts off the tree and Doreen pre-

sented them. Only the sound of clapping hands broke the silence of the late evening. In the cool evening, under a mango tree, nearly fifty children came timidly and shyly to accept a token of the spirit of Christmas. As night came on, what a peaceful scene it was, accentuated by the soft light of the lanterns, a simple happening, no rush or squabble from a respectful and appreciative rural gathering. Herbert had a few friendly words and a pat on the head for each recipient. The evening ended as gracefully as it began with a few words of thanks from Herbert and an elder speaking in reciprocation. Then the gathering dispersed into the night as peacefully and quietly as they came. There were only two gifts left one for a sick child and another, for one who was away. The very next day just before we left Herbert took the gift to the sick child. That little act of kindness on his part, I am certain, would have helped the child to recover faster than any medication. We were privileged to have witnessed an unforgettable Christmas story.

Prior to the 23rd, one evening, Herbert asked us to accompany him on a short drive. We piled into his black Lancaster into the boot of which he put in some folding chairs. After a short drive along a jungle track, he parked by a high ridge which he told us was Galkirikanda. It extended in a north-south direction roughly and we scrambled up carrying the chairs until we reached a vantage point. We realised that we had a superb view and Herbert requested us to sit, remain quiet and take in the sights and sounds. It was a remarkable request and that was just what we did. We were in fact absorbing the ambience that the peaceful scene and surrounding jungle had to offer. It was just a superb fifteen minutes, as if we were in meditation. It was Herbert who broke the silence and quite honestly we would rather he had not, so much were we taken up with the experience. No surprise that the Buddhist monks of an earlier age chose such remote and high places for spiritual purpose.

Herbert was keen to point out some landmarks in the spreading distance before the gloom of night came on. There, almost directly to the east was the Kala-wewa, its waters a silver shimmer, credited to King Dhatusena, the great tank builder of the fifth century A.D. Unfortunately he was to meet with a sad death at the hands of his son Kassappa of Sigiriya fame. Much closer and to the southeast the white dome of Nagala Vihare (stupa or pagoda) stood out of the surrounding jungle. The Sri Naga Vihare further away associated with the movements of King Valagambahu when he took refuge from the enemy. This vihare Herbert informed us was one of the very few which had its lower half in

square form. We also learnt of the Makulugawewa Aramya (Hermitage) which was nearly covered by forest, also towards the south-east. In the north there was the town of Galgamuva and the tank of the same name. Further north and just discernible was Rajangane, rich in history with many vihares and caves. In the south rising to about 300 ft was Yapahuwa, which we had visited. This city, for a short period in the 13th century was the seat of the Sinhala king. Maho and the station could be easily identified to the south. With darkness overtaking us we retraced our steps back to the car and to the village. Once more we had shared with Herbert and Doreen something special which gave him much happiness. It was a magic experience out of nothing.

We had still to witness one of this remarkable person's talents. One evening whilst we were having our usual happy hour out in the garden, Herbert excused himself and went inside.

About half an hour later he invited us to dinner, entirely his very own effort. It was excellent. Doreen confirmed that he was a superb chef. That's how versatile he was.

We bade goodbye to the happy couple on the



A section of the ancient spill, Kala-wewa tank looking upstream. This stupendous work of hammered granite, excellently dressed and at the top mortised, existed in a contracted form for centuries before it was enlarged in A.D. 477.

24th and were back at our respective homes to fulfil our Christmas obligations. My mind however went back to the Christmas tree at Ehetuwewa and that memory

has never diminished. Herbert and Doreen have passed on to a heaven they deserve but they will live on in my memory and I am sure in the memories of many others with whom they shared those special moments in their life. My only regret is that I did not record for posterity those interesting stories Herbert Keneman related to us in Ehetuwewa.

Years later, after he had passed on, an Eco-tourism project was started at the southern end of Galkiriyakande, in the proximity of the village of Ulpotha. It was financed by Mr Viren Perera and was the first of its kind in the island and opened for business in the late 1990's and I understand that it is a successful venture. Based as it is on the lines of a traditional village, I am sure Herbert would have smiled approvingly.

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## Letters to the Editor



Dear Sumane,

I received the Journal today. Thanks for a good job well done. Do try your best to keep to the values that David worked into it, which makes it something more than what it may have been. He brought about a blend of love for the country/countries, respect for all communities with no weightage, a need to concentrate on our immediate past which formed this community of ours today and a fine mix of scholarship and nostalgia. David, being a "convinced" Ceylankan and not a born and bred Sri Lankan or Ceylonese was perhaps able to maintain a safe distance from emotional attachment to people, places and causes - perhaps that's what made him invent the character of the journal. I had the good fortune to meet him and host him for lunch in Colombo and found him very much akin to me, in attitudes. He had that huskiness in his voice even then, but he did not let on.

Let me add a brief appreciation for "The Sri Lankan Who Never Was"

**"Farewell, too little and too lately known  
Whom I began to think and call my own  
For sure our souls were near allied and thine  
Cast in the same poetic mould as mine.  
One common note on either lyre did strike  
And fools and knaves we both abhorred  
alike" (Dryden)**

May he attain Nibbana.

*Somasiri Devendra*

Dear Editor,

### **The First Ceylonese Family in Australia**

I read with interest the article under the above caption in the CEYLANKAN of February 2002. I wish to add some notes I have in my scrap book (Unfortunately I hadn't noted down the source). It reads that occasionally those convicted in Ceylon were transported to NSW though there was no legal provision to do so in Ceylon at that time (Sri Lanka National Archives Lot 4 / 3 despatches dated January 1813). It states that in 1814 Peter de Wit was convicted for uttering & forging a five pound Rib Dollar note and was transported to NSW (Govt. Gazette 1814 of 23.2.1814). In the same year James Horn of Trincomalee was transported on being found guilty of attempting to commit an unnatural offence on a beast (Sri Lanka National archives, lot 5 / 7, dispatch dated 20.8. 1814.) If these transportations are proved right, it would seem that quite a few Ceylonese have been transported to NSW, and merits more research.

*Vama Vamadevan*

Dear Editor

About the O'Deen saga - Victor Melder has co-opted me to do some research into this. It is a fascinating subject. He may be the first Ceylonese to have been exiled to Australia. There is another Aussie here, at the moment, Tom Baban, who is searching for details about his grandfather Don Thomas Babun who had migrated in the 1890s. Son of a white Australian, who had left his Sinhalese mother, he lived with his grandfather and is proud of the Sinhala connection. I was telling him the O'Deen story last night, now I can fill him in and also get him to join the Society.

Much more to tell - but this is enough. Best of luck - trust in God but keep the powder dry!

*Somasiri*

## Book Reviews



### The way we grew

by D T Devendra

242 pp published by Sridevi Printers

ISBN 955-9419-17-X

I first read this book in one sitting. It was well into the dawn hours when I put it down, not without a certain *deja vu* feeling crawling in my head. Have I been here before? Most certainly yes, but could I have done such a readable chronicle? I doubt it.

Three weeks later I read it again, but this time around it was savoured over several sittings, such is the captivating nature of this book. The story spans a mere 17 years of D T Devendra's life in a village where he grew up. He does not go one day beyond his seventeenth year when he leaves home to get a job as a teacher upon gaining his Cambridge Senior Certificate. He describes with disarming candour family life set in a typical Sri Lankan village during the early twentieth century. That it was a struggle for his parents is never in doubt, sometimes one never knew where the next meal came from.

*"Hunger is agony. We stripped all trees of edibles - even immature - to appease it"*

*"Most vividly I remember father in his worst days of poverty. Then he had learnt the art of gilding. With his things in a carpet-bag he would travel well away from home and ply his trade. For him the task was mean and a dishonour to his father"*

*"Even if I descend to the streets with a coconut shell in my hands (a reference to begging) yet will I give my children a worthy education"*

It is in this crucible that D T Devendra was moulded. Neither of his parents knew English,

but sent their children to fee levying institutions like Richmond College Galle to gain a position that their own circumstances prevented them. The book is no mere chronicle of a family struggling to rise above poverty and lack of formal education, but one that goes beyond just this family. Devendra has written with compassion and honesty, has avoided the pitfall of glorifying the "good old days", dealt with realities such as caste without sanitising any issues.

To quote his son Somasiri "What he has recorded, however, makes it a commentary on the social mores of the period, important to a readership beyond his family, and that is the rationale behind its publication today."

If you judge a tree by its fruit, one is hard put to find a better example. D T Devendra (1901-1972), teacher, archaeologist, researcher Buddhist scholar and writer has to his credit three of his children as published authors, Tissa, Somasiri and Ransiri Menike. The mighty influence DT had on his offspring in achieving scholarly heights is recounted in the last chapter in the book added by Tissa, his eldest, about his parents.

This is a book to have and to hold, to be emulated in its concept of telling a story to the third generation. We often miss out the rich tapestry of our roots. Knots and kinks notwithstanding the sweetness is all there for us to enjoy.

*Reviewed by Sumane Iyer*

Available from Ceylon Society of Australia library at  
\$ 10.00 + P&H. Inquiries to Sumane Iyer  
02 9456 4737 - e-mail: [sumane@cicon.com.au](mailto:sumane@cicon.com.au)

ΩΩΩΩ

### Ripples on a Lake

by Eileen De Silva

This Anthology in Professor Yasmine Gooneratne's words "reflect the occasional meditations of a happy and productive life that has included the often traumatic and difficult ex-

perience of migration from the homeland to another country".

'Ripples on a lake' comprises forty-seven of Eileen's poems arranged in motley fashion yet powerful in its presentation of various aspects of life and living. Her poems range from "Sculptor":

*'He cleaves the living granite with his hands,  
He smites, and oceans split; and mountains crash.  
Slowly the embryo takes shape in the silent unprotesting  
womb of stone.'*

To:

*'Am I a butterfly  
That dreamt last night  
That I was a man?  
Images, whirl, crowding whizzing round  
In a moment of subconscious recognition.'*

"Dreaming" 'Hitting headlines', 'Reflections', 'Sigiriya', 'Song of the island's daughter', 'Achievement', are some of the captivating titles. It is an immensely readable collection. The poems have a resonance both captivating and coquettish, they conjure visions of a bygone era in Sri Lankan Society where poetry, prose and everything British was a passport to riches.

In George Meredith's words *"Prose can paint evening and moon light, but poets are needed to sing the dawn"*. This is Eileen's first venture into publishing of her poetry, written since childhood. I highly commend the publication to all those who are interested in poetry, as well as those who have an interest in promoting the talents of Sri Lankan migrants in Australia.

**The book is available from:**  
**Eileen De Silva**  
**22 Yallambie Road**  
**Lane Cove NSW 2066**  
**Price: \$10.00 plus postage**  
**Telephone: 02 9427 3657**

*Review by Mohini Gunasekera*

## A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Mr. Koshala de Silva  
London UK  
Dr Chandani & Alex Lokuge  
Melbourne VIC  
Mr. Bashur & Maltisia Musafer  
Telopea NSW  
Mr. Rodney & Norma Geddes  
Lane Cove NSW  
Mr. Dennis & Gwen Dirckze  
McKinnon VIC  
Mr. Ernest & Yvonne Gauder  
Jacana VIC  
Mrs. Dhilkie & Tharin Peiris  
Monee Ponds VIC  
Mr. Milton & Chitra Fernando  
Baulkham Hills NSW  
Ms Shevathie Goonesekera  
London UK  
Dr Shiva & Agatha Breckenridge  
Oregon USA  
Mrs. Sujiva & Tissa Ratnaikie  
North Balwyn VIC  
Miss Raine Siebel  
Swan View WA

...have joined since publication of  
**The Ceylankan Journal no: 17.**

### Ad Wise.....

1. Heineken refreshes the parts other beers cannot reach. 1975 by Terry Lovelock
2. A diamond is forever. De Beers ad 1940 by Frances Gerety
3. Vorsprung durch Technik (Progress through technology) Audi Motors 1986
4. Say it with flowers – Society of American Florists coined by Patrick O'Keefe 1917
5. All the news that is fit to print – motto of New York Times coined by owner Adolph Ochs 1896
6. If you want to get ahead, get a hat – The Hat Council 1965

## 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. Please note subscriptions are for a calendar year.

### Annual subscriptions are:

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

## GENEALOGY CORNER

Raine Siebel, a new member would like to explore connections with Potger, Bartholomeusz, Atwell & Paige families. Anyone with relevant information kindly contact Raine at: [raines3@bigpond.com](mailto:raines3@bigpond.com) or phone 08 9255 2426.

## Computers are they male or female?



The men say:

1. No one but their creator understands their internal logic
  2. The native language they use to communicate with each other is incomprehensible to everyone else
  3. Even the smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for possible later retrieval and use
  4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half your pay cheque on accessories for it.
- So they are female!!!

And the women say:

1. In order to do anything with them, you have to turn them on
  2. They have a lot of data but still can't think for themselves
  3. They are supposed to help you solve problems, but half the time they ARE the problem and
  4. As soon as you commit to one, you realise that if you'd waited a little longer, you could have gotten a better model
- So they are male.

And what do you say? If you want to get into the fray, e-mail your comments to the editor.

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## NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

Saturday 8th June 2002 at 6.30 p.m.  
Venue: Willow Park Hall  
25 Edgeworth David Avenue  
Hornsby NSW 2077

**Speaker: Merlyn Swan**  
*author of "Today's Believer"*

Subject

**"In search of the miraculous in Ceylon"**

Meeting will be followed by a light supper

### RSVP to

Rienzie—9874 0146, Sumane—9456 4737,  
Chandra—9872 6826.  
Volunteers bringing plates for supper, please contact  
Chandra

## NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING

Sunday 2nd June 2002 at 5.30 p.m.  
Venue: Holy Redeemer Church Cnr York Street &  
Mont Albert Road  
Surrey Hills VIC 3127  
Melway 46 H10

**Speaker: Dr Michael Roberts**

Subject

**"Eating stone, drinking blood"**

Re-analysing story of the arrival of the  
Portuguese

Queries to Shelagh—AH 9808 4962  
Or Srilal—AH 9809 1004

## How to become a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia

Contact Sumane Iyer  
P O Box 170 Berowra NSW 2081  
E-mail: [sumane@cicon.com.au](mailto:sumane@cicon.com.au)

and request an application form

### In search of speakers

The committee would welcome nominations of knowledgeable and academic persons to speak at our regular meetings, both in Sydney and Melbourne. You may have friends, relations who live in or visit Australia. Our calendar for the rest of the year is - September/October and November/December. Dates can be arranged to suit availability of eminent speakers. Please contact President Hugh Karunanayake on 02 9980 2494 - fax 02 9980 7630 or e-mail [karu@idx.com.au](mailto:karu@idx.com.au)

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