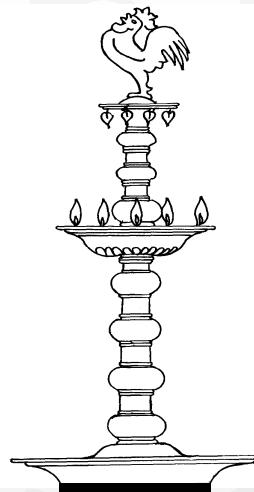


THE CEYLANKAN



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EDITORIAL

As we roll out 23rd Journal of The Ceylankan we derive great satisfaction that the flagship of The Ceylon Society of Australia continues to attract erudite members to its fold. We welcome the latest to join, on page 10, and hope they will not only be keen readers of the Journal, but also share their own experiences and knowledge with the rest of the membership. Each of us have that “something

special” about Sri Lanka that is itching to be born. Most contributors to this Journal are not professional writers and the Editorial Team encourages each and every member to pen their favourite topic. If you need assistance with researching a subject we are here to help. Just email, snail mail or call the Editor and we will get the rescue squad on the job.

We record our thanks to two recent speakers at our quarterly meetings. Prem Kumbukkage an Architect by profession delivered a well illustrated talk on Temple Paintings, at the last Melbourne Chapter meeting.

In Sydney, Robin Walsh, Curator of the Lachlan Macquarie Room, Macquarie University Library took us back in time to examine the fates and fortunes of the 73rd Regiment from Australia to Ceylon.

Last but not the least - a big thank you to the contributors to this Journal. Some were held over for the next issue due to lack of space.

19th Century Images



A woman vendor

Wilpattu National Park- Opened at last

by Rodney St John

It was a dark day indeed for Sri Lanka, when the LTTE, in the 1980's, decided to attack the office of the Wilpattu National Park and kill several of its game rangers. Besides the trauma this caused to the families of those who lost their lives and for regular visitors who knew these officers, the Dept of Wild life lost some very experienced and highly regarded officers. Although trained in wild life management and the prevention of poaching, they were no match for AK 47 rifles. Worse was to come when the authorities decided, quite correctly, that the park should be closed to the public. Yala and Wilpattu were household names to the locals and very much in demand by tourists as well and closing the latter was a big blow. Since then, for nearly 18 years Wilpattu has been a closed book with little or no news emanating. Although some security was in place, it is unlikely that the park could have been properly guarded. The usual menace of poaching, logging and plundering would have reared their ugly heads. Still, it is great news to have the park reopened to the public



Kallivillu Bungalow 1950 s

rich in lime and hence " hard ". You will observe that soap does not lather as it should and tends to leave a residue on your person. From the office the main road is to Kali Villu, approximately 40 kms, with diversions to cover the main villus. The northern boundary of the park is the Moderagam aru whilst the southern boundary is marked by the Kala Oya, the distance between on the western end being 31 kms. The western boundary of the park is the sea named Dutch Bay in the south and Portugal Bay in the north. Here from narrow coastal beaches, cliffs of reddish sand rise like protective walls. As if for further protection a line of hills runs parallel and close to the cliffs ranging from 20 to 75 metres in height, the highest point being Kudremalai. These cliffs and hills are a marked feature of the topography of Wilpattu, particularly if observed from the sea.

The name Wilpattu conjures up a special place, a romantic setting, and something unique. No wonder then that H.C.P. Bell the former Archaeological Commissioner wrote in one of his reports " The calm beauty of those inland lakes is indescribable. The bright blue of the still water, the ring of white sand fringed with grass and forest, mingled greens and browns, the varied bird and animal life and withal the wondrous hush that pervades and sanctifies nature, uninvaded by man's encroachment. Oh! if there be an Elysium on earth , it is this , it is this." Bell's exploration of the ruins in the park, gave him the opportunity to really absorb the serenity and charm of the place and he has expressed his feelings from the heart. Wilpattu is indeed a very special place.



Kokkari Villu photo by Lal Anthonis

while it is nurtured back to its former glory.

Wilpattu National Park is off the Puttalam-Anuradhapura Road, the turn off being at Timbiriwewa approximately 45 kms from Puttalam and 183 from Colombo. From this point it is 8kms to the entrance at Hunuwilagama. As the name suggests, the water supply in this village is

Both Yala and Wilpattu were very popular, with the former having an edge in terms of visitor numbers. This was due to the relative inaccessibility of Wilpattu and also due to the fact that pilgrims to Kataragama and Sithulpauwa also included Yala in their itinerary. Both parks however, have their own charm and appeal. Wilpattu NP is in fact larger than its rival almost by three times (the park area only) and it would take the average visitor more time to observe wild life. The topography of the two parks is also marked by contrast. Generally, it could be stated that Wilpattu is sandy and undulating, Yala has a firmer gravelly surface with many rock outcrops. The unique feature of Wilpattu is the presence of villus about 30 in number, which are located mostly in the

centre and northwest. Borupan Villu, Timbiriwila, Kumbuk Wila, Mahapatessa Wila, Demata Wila, Lunu Wila, Kokkare Wila and Nelum Wila are eight of the most frequently visited spots for wild life observation. Not all of them contain fresh water; a few like Kokkare the largest villu and Lunuwila are salty. Tilapia was introduced into the villus and they bred successfully. Yala has no villus but depends for its water supply on water-holes and restored tanks. Wilpattu also has water-holes and tanks but these are located away from the villu country in areas associated with ancient civilisation. Another feature of Wilpattu is the occurrence of numerous sandy patches in the villu area. These patches of white sand cover 4-5 acres in some places. Also noticeable in Wilpattu are large areas of eroded land the surfaces of which are covered with gravel and pebbles. These are not seen in the villu areas but on firmer ground. Archaeologists have found prehistoric artefacts of chert and quartz scattered throughout the topographical features described. In the early fifties, when four wheels drives were not so common, travel in Wilpattu was difficult and many were the vehicles that got bogged in the sand. It was part of the fun.

The vegetation of the park is in keeping with the arid climate, consisting of scrub jungle with trees generally not exceeding 9 metres in height. This is a result of the annual rainfall averaging less than 50 inches, together with the desiccating effects of sea winds and poor soils. The most common trees, gnarled and twisted are Wira (*Drypetes sepiaria*), Gurukina (*Calophyllum calaba* Welang (*Pterospermum canescens*), Palu (*Manilkara hexandra*), Mayila (*Bauhinia racemosa*) Dan (*Syzygium caryophyllum*) and Kiriya (*Acacia leucophloea*) to name a few. These are also found in Yala. Palu, Wira and Dan when in fruit are a great attraction to bear and other wild life including the ungulates. From January to April wild flowers are in bloom, such as Kapu-kinissa (*Hibiscus eriocarpus*) and Ranawara (*Cassia auriculata*), Niyangala (*Gloriosa superba*), Kora-kaha (*Memecylon umbellatum*) Ratmal (*Ixora coccinea*) and numerous other species. Wilpattu has some species that are rare in Yala such as Kapu-kinissa and Ginitilla (*Argyreia populifolia*). Gal Kera (*Ochna squarrosa*) for instance, though common in

Wilpattu is absent in Yala. Similarly there are species common in Yala but absent in Wilpattu such as Vellangiriya (*Capparis horrida*).

In the fifties and sixties, wild life enthusiasts always associated Wilpattu with the leopard and the bear whilst Yala was known for elephant. Indeed many of the earlier photographs and films showing the leopard were taken in Wilpattu. In more recent times the Yala leopards have got the attention they deserve. Whether the wild life demography has changed substantially in the last twenty years has still to be assessed. Certainly Wilpattu never had

and will not have as many elephants as Yala, the question is will it have as many leopards as it did? I recall a time when we could watch a leopard ambling along the road not bothered by the vehicle following it or stop the vehicle and observe a couple gambolling by the road side. Dieter Plage's film which

is based on the leopards of Wilpattu is very illustrative of the leopards of this park. Lets hope there has been no marked change. Besides these special attractions Wilpattu has a good representation of other animals, from the grazing ungulates, Sambar, Spotted deer, Red or Barking Deer to the smaller mongoose and reptiles. The bird life is truly fascinating and it would be easy to run up an impressive list in the course of a week. From Jungle fowl, to babblers, kingfishers, pigeons, doves, quail to numerous waders in the villus, and the magnificent raptors. Many of these can be observed from the comfort of your Bungalow.

In the early fifties the " White " doe (albino) of Wilpattu was a star attraction. It was usually seen with a herd near Thimbiri Villu and sightings covered about five years. Visitors were thrilled to see the animal whenever they were lucky. It is on record that it gave birth to a fawn, which had a white neck and light brown body. Unfortunately both mother and fawn vanished not long afterwards. Location wise both these major National Parks occupy the arid zones of the country, one in the north-west and the other in the south west. They both depend on the northeast monsoon for rain and are affected by the vagaries of these winds. In Wilpattu if the monsoon fails, many villus run dry and this affects the wild life population, particularly

(Continued on page 14)



Leopard at Wilpattu by Lal Anthonis

A flashback to the visit of Amy Johnson to Sri Lanka

by *The Rambler*

On May 24 1930, Amy Johnson, a 27 year old British pilot from Hull in Yorkshire, landed in Darwin after an epic flight of 8000 miles. She arrived in her two year old De Havilland Moth aircraft becoming the first woman to fly solo from England to Australia. Amy Johnson's solo flight to Australia was an attempt to break the solo flight record set by the Australian pilot Bert Hinkler, but she fell short of the record by a few days mainly due to bad weather, although during the initial stages of her flight she was well ahead of the times established by Hinkler. When she touched down in Darwin on that historic day she was an instant hero. Her name was soon to be on the lips of millions of people across the world. No woman had braved the skies in this manner before, and she became an inspiring example for women, in an age which confined them mainly to a housewife's role. Following her historic flight to Australia, The "Daily Mail" awarded her 10,000 pounds "the largest amount ever paid for a feat of daring" and she received congratulatory messages from the King and Queen of England, the British Prime Minister, and other international dignitaries. Physically exhausted by her attendance at a number of public appearances in Australia, and disappointed by her inability to break Hinkler's record, the young heroine decided to change her original plan to fly back to Europe and chose to go back home by ship.

On July 16 1930 the steamer "Naldera" arrived in the port of Colombo with the "Queen of the Air" on board. An enthusiastic crowd was present at the harbour to

greet the young heroine who was described as "carefree and utterly unspoilt by fame". On arrival in Colombo she was hurried away from the hustle and bustle of the city, to the placid rural charm of Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike's country seat at Horagolle. Here Sir Solomon received her with characteristic hospitality, and like many other famous visitors to Horagolle she

planted a tree there. The tree was named "Johnnie's Tree". The young aviator preferred to be called Johnnie. After her call at Horagolle, the visitor was taken to Colombo to the Methodist College where she was greeted by an assembly of Wesleyans. The girls of the school presented her with a beautiful pendant. Her advice to the assembled girls was typical, "Stick to it and you will

win through".

Amy's parents were keen Rotarians. The Rotary Club of Colombo had made note of that, and organized a splendid lunch in her honour. It was presided over by Mr H.E. Newnham the President of the Rotary Club, who later that evening in his role as the Mayor of Colombo received "Johnnie" on behalf of the people of Colombo at a spe-



Amy Johnson **



"Johnnie" at the Colombo Town Hall

cial meeting of the Colombo Municipal Council.

She was presented with an exquisite set of

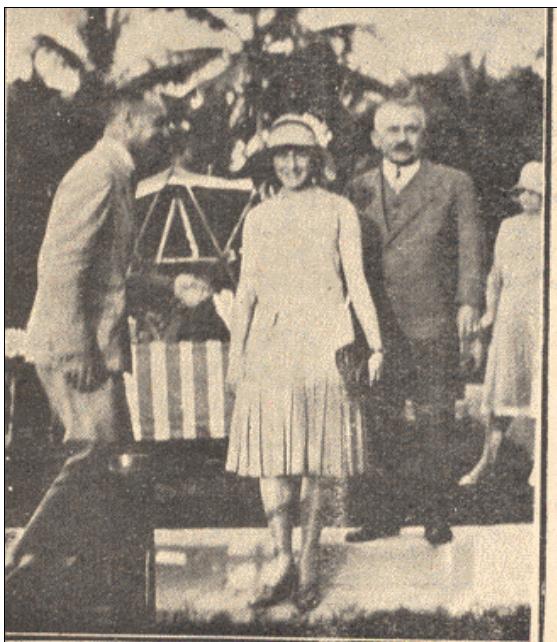
Ceylon jewellery. In reply to the speeches of welcome, Amy said that she loved the East with its romance and adventure and hoped to visit Colombo again.

The last reception for the evening was provided by the management of the Grand Hotel, Mount Lavinia. A large gathering assembled at the hotel where music was provided by the Russian Balalaika and Viennese Orchestras. The foxtrot "Amy" was the signature tune for the evening. Mr and Mrs Arthur Ephraums proprietors of the hotel, presented Amy with a beautiful ebony elephant, caparisoned with embossed silver and silk tassels of Mr Ephraums' racing colours. "Johnnie" was delighted, and her only regret was that she could not stay longer and enjoy the company of the many friends that she made in Ceylon. The young heroine captivated Colombo in a manner that few other celebrities have done. Sadly, Amy's wish to re visit Colombo was not to be fulfilled. On her return to England

she took to more flying. A few months later, she attempted to fly across Siberia to China but had to give up when she crash landed her plane near Warsaw. In July of the same year she set a record for England to Japan in a Puss Moth aircraft together with fellow aviator Jack Humphreys. The following year she married a celebrated aviator James Mollison and in July that same year she set a record for a solo flight from England to Cape Town in a Puss Moth, breaking the record established by her husband. After World War 2 broke out, the Royal Air Force invited Amy to join the newly established Air Transport Auxiliary. In January 1941 she set off in atrocious weather conditions on a mission that was described as routine. Eye witnesses saw her plane plummeting into the Thames estuary from which neither her plane nor her body was ever recovered.. Among the many ways in which the brave aviator is remembered, is the annual Amy Johnson Memorial Scholarship awarded to outstanding women pilots to help further their careers.

(This article is based on material published in the August 1930 Edition of The Ceylon Causierie. The accompanying photographs are from the same source.)

** Picture credits: www.ninety-nines.org



Miss Amy Johnson is here seen at the Grand Hotel with Mr. Ephraums on her left. The Queen of the Air was given a right royal reception on the occasion of her recent visit, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

ARABIAN PROVERBS

Date fruits go to waste on top of a high slippery palm tree. So is a miser's money

Don't visit a miser when he is cooking, lest he charges you for the smell

Since the head of the family is the drummer, why blame his family for moving on rhythm

Did you fall down or did the Camel throw you off his back? He said "It makes no difference. I have fallen."

Your head is your house: furnish it.

The Homes on Flower Road fifty years ago

by *Vinodh L.J. Wickremaratne*

The name “Flower Road” is believed to have originated from the Flamboyant (*poenciana regia*) trees that lined either side of the road from more than a century ago. The Flamboyant was also known as “the king of the forest” or “flame of the forest”, and when in bloom during the months of April and May, is a truly magnificent spectacle.

The road was renamed Sir Ernest de Silva Mawatha in 1957, in honour of one of its well-known residents. It was Sir Ernest’s father A.E. de Silva, one of the earliest residents on the road, who built the house first named “Stephanotis” and later called “Claire”, and today the home of the Russian Embassy. ‘Stephanotis’ together with other houses such as the “The Monastery” “The Fernery”, “Yalta”, “St Leonard’s” “Glenesk” and “Linden Hall” were the



pioneer homes along Flower Road, built around the turn of the twentieth century. Most of these homes are no longer in existence, having given way either to demands for more residential space, or to the pressures of emerging architectural trends.

Flower Road extends from Turret Road in the north, to Cambridge Place in the south. The road is spread along the Municipal wards of Kollupitiya, Bambalapitiya, and Cinnamon Gardens. For several decades a huge Bo tree (*ficus religiosa*) stood at its intersection with Greenpath now known as Ananda Coomaraswamy Mawatha. For many years the tree served as a natural round-about for traffic, but was also a traffic hazard at night-time, and several major accidents were recorded at this location. No politician was game enough however, to risk the ire of zealous Buddhists who venerated the tree, by cutting it down. Sometime in the 1960s, under cover of a curfew imposed by then prevailing Emergency regulations, the Municipal Council of the day took the bold step of removing the giant Bo tree, at dead of night. Local residents passing the Greenpath junction next morning were rubbing their eyes in disbelief at the miracle that had taken place overnight! Today, there are traffic lights at this junction as well as at the junction at the Turret Road intersection. Flower Road, although only about one and a half kilometres in length, continues to be a major thoroughfare connecting approaches to the city from the southern suburbs of Colombo.

Located in one of the most elite residential areas in Colombo, Flower Road was well known for its stately homes, all situated within a veritable stone’s throw from the elite social, educational, and cultural institutions of the Cinnamon Gardens area. The Turf Club, the Garden Club, the Lawn Club, and the Orient Club were within a few minutes walk from Flower Road, as was the two most sought after educational institutions, Royal College and Ladies College. Children from most of the homes in Flower Road attended these two schools.

Fifty years ago, Flower Road was a beautiful tree lined avenue of the same width as it is today. In earlier days postal addresses of houses were not adjacent numerically, as a large property may have several assessment

numbers eg #5,#7,#9. In such an instance the owner may have preferred his property to be known only as #7. In this article an attempt is made to identify as many houses as possible that existed in the mid twentieth century, together with some references to the personalities that were associated with them.

At its northern end between Greenpath and Turret Road was the newly built home of the Ghouse family at No 2 Flower Road. On the opposite side was a property, which fronted Turret Road earlier, named Wilhelm's Ruhe. At the Greenpath intersection on the eastern side facing Greenpath was Anandagiri the home of the leading criminal lawyer of the day, the redoubtable R.L. Pereira. This house was earlier the home of the Freudenberg family and of the German Club. It was also for a short period, the first home of the Orient Club before it moved down to premises at the southern end of Flower Road and finally to its permanent home in Racecourse Avenue. At No 11 stood the home of E.R. A de Zilwa the Director of Fisheries at the time. A few doors away was "West View" which housed the Embassy for Pakistan. Dr L.C. Gunasekera lived at No 21, which adjoined the home at No 23 of Dr C.H. Gunasekere the famous Royal, All Ceylon, and Middlesex cricketer who was in charge of the Public Health Department of the Colombo Municipality for many years. It was later the home of Nirmal Peiris. At No 27 was the home of F.J. McCune an engineer with Davidson and Co. Adjoining was the property belonging to Edmund Samarasekera of Matara and later to his daughter and son in law Lalita, and George Rajapakse. George was the Minister of Fisheries in the Sirimavo Bandaranaike cabinet of the 1970s, and an alumnus of Royal College having captained its cricket team with distinction in 1943.C.X. Martyn the lawyer and politician from Jaffna lived at No 31. At No 39 stood "Linden Hall" which belonged to J.Mathias de Mel and later home to his son, V.M. de Mel for many years. This was a spacious home

standing on a large block of land and was for some years the U.S. Cultural Centre. Linden Hall is now the premises of the Saudi Arabian Embassy. Dr O.L.F. Senaratne, the ophthalmologist and All Ceylon cricketer built his home at No 45. At No 51 stood" St Leonard's" the home of the District Judge of Colombo, L.M. Maartensz, and later that of Waldo Sansoni also a District Judge. This house was demolished in the nineteen fifties and in its place several new homes appeared including that of Ashroff Cader, the CR and FC and Ceylon rugger forward, now resident in Melbourne. At the southern end on the eastern side of Flower Road, was" Yalta" the home of Sir William Mitchell, then of Dr Frank Grenier, and later of Arthur Ephraums the hotelier and racehorse owner. Arthur Ephraums who owned the Mount Lavinia Hotel, Bristol Hotel, and New Oriental Hotel in Galle, lived in Yalta till the early 1940s. Hope Abeywardene, who established the Pembroke Academy in its premises, purchased it. The Hepponstall family, at one stage, owned the Yalta Flats that were built on part of the property. Many a student from schools in the area took their final fling at the University Entrance Examination from Pembroke Academy, now long defunct and forgotten. Part of the original Yalta property on which the Pembroke Academy existed, is now occupied by a set of modern apartments called "Flower Court".

On the northern side of Flower Road directly opposite "Anandagiri" was a large block of land, which remained bare for many years. The land belonged to R. L. Pereira who purchased it despite there being a defect in the title. It was later subject to long litigation, and featured in a New Law Report in the 1960s. Giving evidence in the District Court where the litigation originated, R.L. Pereira recounted consultations with his colleague H.V. Perera before deciding to purchase the land. It was a case of the leading criminal lawyer consulting the leading civil lawyer!

Adjoining this land was a property belonging to the Ceylon Workers Congress, which housed the Lanka Soviet Friendship League. The residence of the Ambassador for Brazil stood next. Rosary Florists and the adjoining ice cream café run by the Naik family was a popular rendezvous for schoolboys. Further on southwards was the home of the flamboyant man about town Sardha Ratnawira and his parents. Further on was the home of Dr Willie Ratnavel the founder of Glasshouse, Sri Lanka's first privately operated pathological service. Nos 46 and 48 was the property purchased by the Maliban Biscuit magnate A.G. Hinniappuhamy. No 48 presently belongs to his daughter and son in law Lena and Dr Don Wijeratne of Sydney.

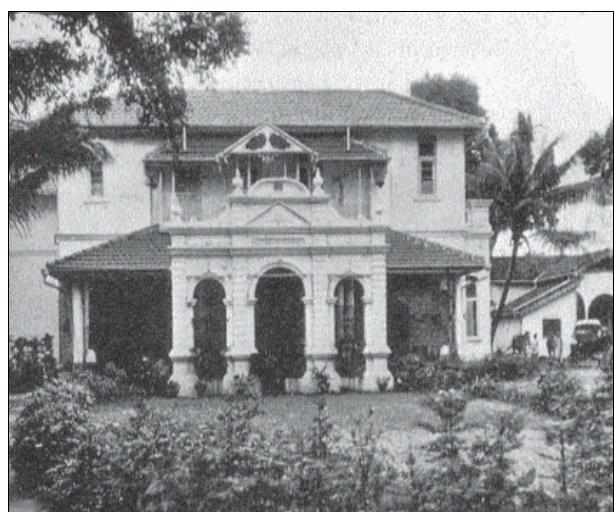
Around here stood the home called "Glenesk" which was owned by Hermann Loos, District Judge, after whom the coveted Hermann Loos trophy is annually awarded to the school with the best cadet contingent in Sri Lanka. Hermann Loos had 3 sons who after their education at Royal College, migrated to Australia in 1915, then travelled to France at their own expense to join the British troops in World War1. Two of the boys were wounded, and the third, James Loos, was killed in action. At No 50 was "Pathmalayan" the home of Sir Sangarapillai Pararajasingham, the son in law of Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam, the first among the "natives" to pass the coveted Ceylon Civil Service examination. The Shell Service station stood next door, and is no longer in operation, the building having been demolished by its present owners the Hettiaratchis, proprietors of Premasiri Stores on Duplication Road.

Inner Flower Road runs beside it. Across this road at No 58 is "Sirimathipaya" once the stately home of Sir Ernest de Silva, Chairman of the Bank of Ceylon and at one time reputedly the richest man in Ceylon. Sir Ernest built this house in 1920 and he first named it "Claire" after his old college in Cambridge. He later renamed it Siri-



"Sirimathipaya"

mathipaya, but not neglecting "Claire" which name he bestowed on the house



"Stephanotis" later renamed "Claire"



Sir Ernest de Silva

originally built by his father A.E. de Silva (Snr) and which was called "Stephanotis" "till then.

"Stephanotis" was at various times the home to kinsmen of Sir Ernest de Silva. Dr Oliver Medonza and Gunasena de Zoysa were among

its well-known inhabitants. Sirimathipaya, was later acquired by the Government and was the Prime Minister's office at one time. Adjoining the two stately homes owned by the De Silva family, was a house called "The Fernery". The story goes that Lilian Nixon the Principal of Ladies College, then situated in Slave Island, was driving along Flower Road when she was attracted by this house and property. She soon made arrangements for its purchase and Ladies College moved into the newly constructed premises in 1910.

Further south beyond Ladies College and its Chapel was the home of the Indonesian Charge de Affairs, but owned by J.L.D. Peiris and whose son Chitru occupied it in later years calling the home "Yahala", after the family estate Yahalatenne. The last property on that side of Flower Road was originally called "The Monastery" and at one time was the home of the Orient Club. It was later demolished and the Shell Co constructed a modern building in its place. Its General Manager P.D. Finn occupied this house for many years in the nineteen fifties. Coincidentally, the property that once housed the Orient Club later housed the Eighty Club in the 1970s when the latter's premises at Torrington Square were commissioned for Army use. When the Eighty Club was given back its premises, the army took over the building in Flower Road, which suffered a terrorist attack in 1990 s.

Flower Road has seen many changes over the past century. At the dawn of the twentieth century, affluent Burgher families owned many of the properties on Flower Road. With the Burgher Diaspora commencing around the 1950s, ownership is now largely with the other indigenous communities. The trees that once lined this beautiful road are sadly no longer there. To the antiquarian there is some consolation however, as some of the stately homes still retain their original boundaries and no subdivisions have taken place. Another whole-

some feature is the absence of commercial sprawl, so much in evidence in other major approach roads to the city such as Galle Road, Duplication Road, and Union Place. If this trend is maintained, we can continue to enjoy this beautiful drive in the heart of Colombo's residential area.

(I would like to acknowledge the inspiration and encouragement received from The Rambler who wrote the two previous articles in this series on Havelock Road and Turret Road in CEYLANCAN Journal No: 8 and Journal No:17 respectively)

A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Jayantha & Anne Somasundaram
Gordon ACT

Homi & Marjorie Jilla
South Yarra VIC

Allan & Barbara Wood
Lilydale Tasmania

Dr Saman & Sirimavo Kelegama
Rajagiriya Sri Lanka

Terry & Lorna Pereira
Wheelers Hill 3150

Ranjith & Flora Wijesinha
Bundoora VIC

Dr Percy & Naomi De Zilwa
Bentleigh VIC

Thomas & Wendy Baban
Bibra Lake WA

Gayani Samarawickreme
Mount Waverley VIC

Christopher & Rosemary Weeramantry
Colombo Sri Lanka

... who have joined since publication of Journal 22.

Some Characters of the Old Ceylon Bar

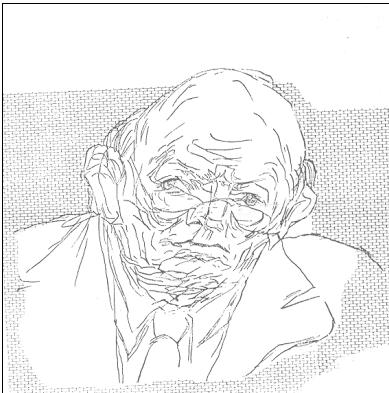
Cox Sproule: A Merry Old Soul

By Joe Simpson

Stories about Cox Sproule, the Kandy lawyer-satirist, were legion during his lifetime, and many have survived by word of mouth to the present day. Sproule was indeed a character among characters at the old Kandy bar. Sir Gerard Wijeyekoon devoted a page to him in his *Recollections* (Colombo, 1951), where he tells us that Cox was a son of J.H. Sproule, a leading light of the Kandy criminal defence bar in his time. We know that J. H. Sproule was in turn the son of a witty Dublin Irishman named William Bernard Sproule, who came to Ceylon in the late 1830s to teach at the Garrison School in Colombo. In 1844 W. B. Sproule began teaching at the old Colombo Academy (today, Royal College). Cox's father was the product of his father's 1841 marriage to Miss Mary Hoffman. Significantly, J.H. Sproule was the one lawyer who could sway a jury of English planters, not known for their sympathy for the underdog, particularly when that underdog happened (as was usually the case) to be a "native". Sproule Senior was intensely dramatic, and could shed real tears when addressing a jury, if the case looked bad enough for his client. The great Dornhorst used to tell would-be clients seeking his help in Kandy criminal cases, that there was no point taking him up to Kandy, so long as J.H. Sproule was there.

J.H. Sproule had a large family of sons and daughters. One son (Percy) eventually retired to England after being Chief Justice of Malaya - as a boy at St. Thomas' College in 1890 Percy had briefly shared a room with the young Sir Gerard Wijeyekoon. Two

other sons (Hugh and Quentin) trained as barristers in England and never returned to Ceylon – Hugh Sproule is mentioned in Sir Gerard's *Recollections* as having been one of the Ceylon-born barrister F. H. M. Corbet's distinguished guests at a high-profile legal dinner in London given by the combined Inns of Court debating societies in mid-1901, to honour the French advocate who had courageously defended Captain Dreyfus against the spurious treason charges that sent him to Devil's Island. Yet another son (Frank) remained in Ceylon and joined the Public Works Department.



Edward Cyril Lambert (known universally as "Cox") Sproule was the old man's fourth-born son, and inherited all his father's dramatic and legal talents, along with his uncanny skill with a jury. He gained his nickname from an early 1900s stage skit at the old Public Hall titled "Cox and Box" in which he per-

formed so well, playing the role of the impudent youngster "Cox" opposite Ernest Joseph's character "Box", that the name stuck to him like glue for ever afterwards. Sir Gerard describes him as a past master of wit and sarcasm, brilliant at quick repartee, with occasional flippancy, yet no Judge ever became angry with him. He wrote many witty poems about his friends, and a great many more that remained oral, no doubt because he was all too aware of the libel laws! Sir Gerard observed that if only Cox Sproule had been more diligent and "steady" about his legal work he could have risen to the top of his chosen profession, but unfortunately he never took life seriously, so his clients did not repose much confidence in him. The Ceylon writer Douglas Raffel, in an article titled *Old Cox Sproule, A Merry Old Soul*, published some time after Cox's death in 1935, saw it rather differently: according to Raffel, Cox Sproule was sought out by clients near and far for

his brilliance as a defence lawyer, for whom no case seemed too difficult to win, and whose knowledge of the case law was profound and always at his fingertips. Some of Cox's most brilliant addresses in the Supreme Court were when he had an innocuous-looking bottle of ginger-ale by him on the bar table, from which he sipped from time to time. Everyone from the Chief Justice downwards knew that it really contained a stiff mixture of good whisky and soda. Raffel states that Cox took his work very seriously, for all his boundless wit and biting sarcasm: yet he never terrorised witnesses, rather treating them with the sort of gentle geniality that often made them as putty in his hands. Raffel first met Sproule in Kandy when the former was a law student aged almost twenty-two, and many years later was able to say with conviction that if you were so lucky as to spend an hour with Cox Sproule, you were bound to remember that hour for the rest of your life.

Douglas Raffel recounts quite a number of amusing anecdotes about his subject in *A Merry Old Soul*, which limited space regrettably forbids my repeating here in their entirety. One of the funniest involves a spirited exchange he claims he witnessed between Cox and "a well-known person called Lala" – probably the wildly-eccentric Lalla, mother of Doris Ondaatje (née Gratiaen) and grandmother of the famous writer Michael Ondaatje, since Cox opens by exclaiming, "Lala, is it really you, or Doris? You seem to look younger and more beautiful every time I see you..." Cox then proceeds to boast to "Lala" of his "REAL BLACK rose". "Lala" calls him a liar, and Cox protests that he is telling the truth, and invites her to come to his home and see for herself. She accepts, promising to call upon him and Mrs. Sproule that evening. Cox goes home, confides to his wife that he has a predicament: how to turn a pink rose into a black one? Their son Patrick suggests tar, and Minnie Sproule sends a servant off to buy some. ("There goes Faust on his nefarious business," observes Cox). The deed is

done, and "Lala" duly appears to inspect the "black rose". Mightily impressed, she leaves with a sampling – and continues to rave about the "black" roses until she gets tar on her nose from smelling them!

On another occasion, when his daughter was having her seventeenth birthday party at his father-in-law's fine home in Kandy, Cox appeared at the festivities disguised as a visiting Jesuit priest, fake foreign accent and all. Now, his elderly and very stern father-in-law Nattie Cooke harboured an intense dislike of the flippant Cox, with whom his daughter Minnie had by then a very "distant" marital relationship. Minnie and everyone else – all except for old Nattie, that is – instantly spotted the true identity of the black biretta-and-cassock-clad "Father Grazziani" with the immense crucifix stuffed in his waist. Cox and his father-in-law proceeded to have a most animated conversation about the beauties of Rome and Verona. Old Nattie Cooke, half-deaf as he was, fell utterly under the spell of his cultured "Italian" visitor. After distributing a few blessings Cox vanished from the scene before his father-in-law could see through his disguise, and for some time afterwards the old man went around the party telling everyone what a "charming" fellow the Italian Father had been, while the rest of the gathering choked back sobs of laughter.

On a potentially far more serious note, Cox Sproule was actually charged with treason and court-martialled at Diyatalawa during the First World War. It was all a farcical mistake, and the great English-born advocate - and one-time Ceylon golfing champion - Brooke Elliott, K.C. managed to secure a complete acquittal. Douglas Raffel tells us the facts. Apparently, Cox had once acted for a German Ceylon resident named Koch, who was interned at Diyatalawa with many other resident Germans (including John Hagenbeck, the renowned wild animal trainer) when war broke out in 1914. After a time, when everyone involved had relaxed a little, these harmless internees were allowed

a certain amount of “on parole” freedom, even wandering about unsupervised outside the main camp. Koch happened to bump into Sproule one evening in the Bandarawela Hotel bar, while Cox was in town to appear in a case. Recognizing his former client, Cox invited him for a drink. Later, Koch returned to camp and Cox went to dinner. It was all perfectly above board and open. The next day at the courthouse, Cox casually mentioned his encounter with Koch, and the word got back to some military brass hats who reported him to the General. The upshot was that Cox was arrested back in Kandy a few days later, summarily charged with aiding and abetting the King’s enemies to escape etc., etc., and thrown into Diyatalawa jail with Koch and the others...none of whom had even tried to escape! Brooke Elliott hurried up to Diyatalawa to represent him at the court-martial, and put paid in short order to a ridiculous claim by some nit-wit of an army officer that Cox’s guilt rested on his having failed to have Koch apprehended at once in the hotel bar. Cox was honourably acquitted after Brooke Elliott pointed out that Koch had never escaped in the first place! Years later, Raffel read the transcripts of the case, and especially enjoyed Cox’s comment about his military persecutors: “The biggest lot of blithering asses I’ve ever had the misfortune to appear amongst!”

In *Relative Merits*, Yasmine Gooneratne offers further insight into Cox Sproule, whose comic genius for wickedly amusing word play was much admired by her father, Sammy Dias Bandaranaike (who appears in a separate endnote). Cox Sproule was something of a gourmet, but alas for him! he was denied free access to the delicious bacon rolls for which Mrs. Minnie Sproule had made Kandy’s Green Café (or New Kandy Bakery) famous, by the fact that he and his wife had lived separate lives for many years. Instead of his wife’s superlative cooking, Cox was left to the tender mercies of the likes of “Mrs. Abey”, one of a series of temporary landladies, strands of whose hair

used to turn up in his curry (thereby inspiring yet another of his humorous ditties). Sproule sometimes got carried away with himself, and produced verses that lacked wit if not vulgarity, such as the diatribe he produced against his estranged wife’s relatives, the God-fearing Bevens, describing how an imaginary polecat urinated down on each of them one Sunday from the roof of St. Paul’s Church, Kandy. Douglas Raffel remembered how during one Easter Sunday in 1928, he had sat at St. Paul’s in a pew in line with Minnie Sproule, her daughter Sheila and her son Patrick Cyril, just behind the pew occupied by the Walter (“Bertie”) Beven family. Just before Rev. Guy started the church service, Cox came in with one “Abba”, so-called because of a pronounced stammer, and both of them sat down in the pew immediately behind his wife. As soon as the singing began, Minnie and the others became painfully aware of the dual presence behind them – Cox singing lustily but tunelessly and “Abba” stammering away mightily. Two rows ahead, Bertie Beven glared back at them over his shoulder. Minnie Sproule bit her lip as tears of suppressed hilarity streamed down her cheeks. Bertie’s face took on a shocked look, because - the others found out later - Cox had stuck his tongue out at him! It was on the way back to the Sproule family home after this church service that Cox had his above-described memorable encounter with (presumably) Lalla Gratiaen.

Douglas Raffel alludes in his article to the published collection of George E. de Silva’s sayings and malapropisms that Cox compiled. Raffel does not actually name George, referring to him only as “this Ward Member” who had gained “a reputation for quaint sayings”. Apparently the book was titled *The Verbal Infelicities of a Masculine Malaprop*, and brought convulsions to the island. One of Cox’s most famous (supposed) sayings was when the Kandy Municipal Council was ponderously discussing a member’s motion to put six tourist gondolas on the Kandy lake: “Why not get a pair and let na-

ture do the rest?" suggested an exasperated George. On another occasion, of a lady who had been married twelve years and had no children, he is said to have observed: "She was impregnable." Or yet again: witness to the Court: "I don't know, Sir. The man gave me the slip." Up jumped the "Masculine Malaprop" (a.k.a. George): "That evidence is not admissible unless the slip is produced." Once, when asked by the Judge what on earth he meant by stating that all his clients were doing was making a "great kallaballoo", George is said by Cox to have solemnly replied: "That, Sir, is the curious offspring of a strange matrimonial alliance between the well-known Sinhalese 'Kalabola' and the equally well-known English 'Hullabaloo'." (Much laughter in court).

Yasmine Gooneratne in *Relative Merits* recounts an anecdote that she once heard about the melancholy occasion in 1935 when Cox Sproule lay on his deathbed. Near the end, Sproule regained consciousness with a start to find by his bedside, lips moving in fervent prayer, the newly ordained Rev. Lakdasa de Mel, scion of a wealthy, educated and highly westernised *Karava* family and future Metropolitan of India, Burma and Ceylon (and no mean humorist himself). Hearing the upper-crust Oxford intonations of his divine intercessor, as Lakdasa called upon his Saviour to rescue the poor sinner's soul from Hell and direct it to Heaven, the dying Sproule is said to have peered up at him and retorted drily with a triumphant final couplet:

*I may go to Heaven, I may go to Hell,
But you are the son of H.L. de Mel!*

Life through a jaundiced eye!



Early bird gets the worm, but it is only the second mouse that gets the cheese. *Anon*

Marriage is like a phone call in the night:
first the ring, and then you wake up.
Evelyn Hendrickson

(Continued from page 4)

the spotted deer. In the difficult months of August and September, just before the rains, the parks are closed to afford some relief to the wild life. Water is the key factor in both parks and much time and money has to be devoted to maintaining the villus and tanks.

Both parks also have a fishing village, which is only occupied during the season in October and abandoned thereafter. It takes these fishermen nearly three hours to cross from Kalpitiya to Pallugaturai, on the Wilpattu coast, a distance of only 28 miles, stopping at some islands en route. Here they spend the season catching, drying and dispatching the fruits of their labour. Being mostly Catholics, there is a small shrine for their use on the mainland. In Yala the fishing village is at Patanangala.

There is much to explore along the Wilpattu coast with a four-wheel drive and a small boat with outboard motor. South from Pallugaturai are the remnants of an ancient harbour, marked on the topographical map and referred to by Brohier in "Discovering Ceylon". Still further south is the village of Pomparippu, which was an important spot during the times when travellers used the old footpath from Puttalam to Mannar. In fact it had a rest house, the site of which is now occupied by the Wild Life Dept. There was also a church in the vicinity. A few kilometres still to the south lies Illandawattan, just across the Uttu Madu Aru. This is an important archaeological site due to the discovery there of a cemetery which contained burial urns. Just to the east of this site scholars have identified some ruins as being those of Valli Vehera. The Mahawamsa, they say, refers to an ancient village named Uruwela, which was located in the vicinity. North of the fishing village on the Kudremalai peak stands a 45ft tower built for trigonometrical purposes in 1878. Greek sailors, according to Brohier likened the appearance of the peak to a horse's head and from their name for this peak, the Malay fisherman named it Kudremalai (Kudre- horse and malai-rock). Scholars believe that this area was an important Malay settlement around the 8th century A.D. There is also reference to Alliarasamy, a princess who had a palace and ruled the area. The red coloured sands on this coast, gave the name Tambapanni, which is associated with the land-

(Continued on page 25)

Story of Temple Paintings in Sri Lanka

By Premachandra Kumbukkage

According to Mahawamsa, in 2nd century B.C when king Dutugemunu lay dying, his brother Sadda Tissa covered the half finished Mahathupa with white cloth and commanded the painters or sittara to make on it a “vedika and rows of filled vases (or puncalasa) likewise and a row with the five finger ornament”.

Fa Hien the Chinese pilgrim in his travel account states, in the 4th century on certain occasions, either side of the road in the capital of Ceylon, was decorated with representations of the Buddha in previous births and that these figures were all painted in diverse colours.

At Dimboolagala the Pulligoda cave temple contains a well-preserved group of Devas (deities), which probably belong to 7th or 8th century. This represents a style of painting



Pulligoda Cave Temple circa 7th century AD

mid way between Sigiriya and Polonnaruwa periods. A very interesting example of cave painting can be seen at Hindagala temple (Peradeniya) dated by A.M Hocart to the 7th century. This has been identified as the visit of God Indra to Indrasala caves to meet Buddha.

Paintings in Thivanka Pilimege (statuary) at Polonnaruwa are the most remarkable wall

paintings next to Sigiriya and have been dated to 12th century by H.C.P. Bell. In his Archaeological report of 1901 Bell says, “*Probably no old structural Buddhist temple in Ceylon, certainly none left to us, has a greater wealth of exquisitely painted scenes from Buddhist legend ever presented than at this medieval vihara at Polonnaruwa*”. What the stone carvings at Sanchi, Bharat, and Amarawathi indicate has been here set out in coloured frescos with a naturalness of spirit and technique that tell the story with unmistakable fidelity. There are paintings still left at Tivanka Pilimege which rival some of the best at cave temples at Ajantha”.

The style of Ajantha as practised in Sri Lanka from 5th to 14th century shows a mastery of the Art of mass composition. A large picture was composed of a number of lesser pictures showing the development of the story. Most important incident of the story took a predominant place whilst secondary incidents were arranged around it. This was the style adopted from Hindagala (7th century) to Dimboolagala and Polonnaruwa (12th century). There is further reference to the technique of painting in ‘Gandadevi Hella’ of the 18th century.

“ Bithithi meti pe lamin
Sunu padam la opin
Makara ruwa hansa yin
Gavara divi sinhayin

Monara saha giravanuth
Kobeiyan kukulanuth
Parevi sanda kovlanuth
Ande bithithivala me sith”.

After clay was applied on the walls and smoothly plastered with lime, pictures of dragons, horses, lions, peacocks, parrots and kovlas were drawn.

Then we come to the Kandyan period.

Totagemuwe Sri Rahula refers to the actual style of painting prevailing in the 15th century in his ‘Selalihini Sandesaya’.

“Mithuru thumo duk sepa dekehima paveti
Bithu sithuwam Rumen pitu no paviti”.

True friends alike in sorrow and happiness;
show not their backs, like pictures on the
wall.

This poem perhaps refers to the convention of the sittara style never to paint a figure with its back to the beholder. Most of the figures were done in profile or at three quarters in order to indicate movement of the story. Only the Buddha, the gods or kings were given the unique privilege of a front view as they became the centre of a picture (Lankatileke paintings Karagampitiya)



Karagampitiya Temple
Kandy period –southern school

It is when we come to the Kandy period that we find a new kind of influence taking its roots in the island. We owe most of what remains of the Kandy period paintings to Kirthi Sri Rajasinghe the great patron of art. Almost all viharas of importance were either restored or rebuilt during his reign from 1747 to 1780. A number of Kandyan kings including Kirthi Sri Rajasinha belong to the Nayakkar Dynasty from Southern India. This perhaps explains why the Southern Indian style of mural painting took its hold on the temple walls of Sri Lanka in preference to the much older Ajantha style.

Here I like to quote from D .B Dhanapala’s the ‘ Story of Sinhalese Painting’.

“ The new style was more primitive in method and simpler in technique. The walls

were covered with Jathaka stories, in long narrow panels of continuous narratives, set close together with the same figure repeated in new situations to show the progress of the story in the manner of modern strip cartoon of tabloid papers”.

Temple paintings are valuable not only for its decorative effect but as a record of historical events as well. Best examples can be seen in restored areas of the Kelaniya temple, where the paintings tell a Jathaka or a story about a previous life of the Buddha. The artist took main events in the story and depicted them on the wall in a continuous series of drawings. The walls of the shrine are usually divided into horizontal bands and the paintings are done between these bands. Sittara artists never took into account the perspective or shading.

Whether the figures show humans or gods their natural appearance was of no importance to the sittara. What were important for him were his subject’s social importance and its human qualities. The figures became smaller and uniform in style, the panels became divided into uniform rectangles, and shading disappears giving place to flat colouring. The viewer has to move on to see the development of the story instead of seeing it as a whole as in the Ajantha style of painting.

One of the best examples of the Kandy style of painting is seen at Degaldoruwa, built in 1771. Devaragampola Silvetenne Unnanse, Nilagema Patabanda, Koswate Hittara Naide were the artists responsible for



Lankatileka Temple—Handessa
Kandy Period

the painting work done here. Two other artists mentioned in copper plate inscriptions of Rajadirajasinha are Naide of Hiriyal and Devendra Mularachchy. Most famous of Degaldoruwa paintings are the scenes from Wessantara Jathaka. Gangarama, Madawela, Suriyagoda, Lankathilake, Ridivihara and Dambulla are the other well-known viharas belonging to the Kandyan period.

A provincial style of the Kandyan period developed in the southern part of the island. In the southern style the artist seems to have derived his inspiration from his everyday surroundings in depicting various scenes. Influence of Portuguese and Dutch cultures in dress, household furniture and transport are all evident in southern style paintings. This can be expected as these western powers were controlling the coastal areas at the time. Mulkirigala, Shailabimarama- Dodanduwa, Thotagamuwa vihara, Telwaate, Sunandarama – Ambalandoda are some of the temples belonging to the southern style.

Paintings were done on

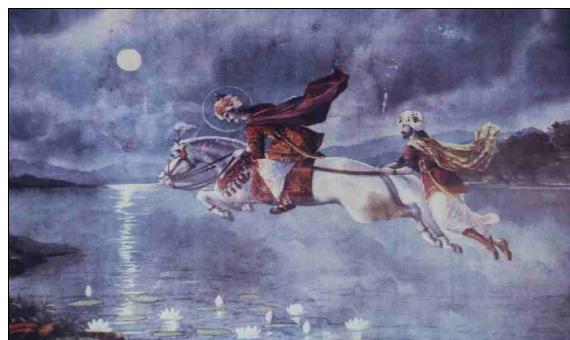
1. Traditionally built walls and ceilings of viharas (like in Lankathileke, Kotte Rajamahavihara and Kelaniya).
2. In Tampita Vihara – (ie, small shrines on stilts like Suriyagoda and Gangarama in Kandy).
3. In cave temples (as in Dambulla and Degaldoruwa).

On all occasions only basic colours were used. They are primarily red, yellow, blue, green, white and black

Yellow - was obtained from 'Gokatu' tree, Blue - used sparingly and made from a plant called 'Avariya', Red - from a material called 'Sadalingum' this is the most widely used colour, Green - little used ,obtained from mixing blue and yellow; green was called 'Pachcha', Black – widely used for drawing the outlines and prepared by burning cotton rags with juice from Jak fruit tree 'Koskiri', 'Dummala', and oil from 'Kakuna' tree, White – made from a type of clay called

'Makulu'.

Undoubtedly the largest collection of cave paintings in Sri Lanka is seen at Dambulla. Nearly 4000 sq.m of them. Most famous of them is the ' Mara Parajaya' or the defeat of mara painted on ceiling of cave in a colossal scale. With the fall of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 and the advent of the British, the sitara style of art suffered years of neglect. The work of M. Sarlis in 1930s contributed greatly to the downfall of the older indigenous art forms. His lithographic prints that were made in Germany were sold by the thousands. M. Sarlis has been an apprentice artist to the well-known scenic painters George and Basil Henricus of the Tower Hall theatre. Hence the style of theatrical scenery



Prince Siddharata crossing river Anoma
Lithograph—M Sarlis

can be seen in lithographs of M. Sarlis. Few temples were also said to have been painted in the same style.

Some of the well known prints of M. Sarlis are:

1. Dream of queen Mahamaya.
2. Prince Siddharatha and queen Mahamaya.
3. Prince Siddhartha on horseback crossing river Anoma with his minister Channa.
4. Defeat of Mara.

It is in this light, we should view the work of Solius Mendis the master painter of the restored Raja Maha Vihara at Kelaniya, which had been done around 1932 under the patronage of Mrs. Helena Wijewardene. Solius Mendis who without any fine art training in the Western school had painted a series of paintings at Kelaniya, which could be consid-

ered as the best work done after the Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya periods. These are mass compositions on a large scale fitted into available wall spaces reminiscent of the original Ajantha art; this has to be expected as Solius Mendis was trained in Shantiniketan in India.

One important feature of the Kelaniya work was that, Solius Mendis chose events from Sri Lankan history for his subject matter compared to earlier Kandyan artists whose work centred upon the life of Buddha and the Jathaka stories. Buddha's defeat of yakkas at Mahiyangama, setting his footprint on Sri-pada, bringing of The Tooth Relic to Ceylon by Hemamala and Danta, landing of Sangamitta with a branch of the Bo tree are some of the most famous historical events immortalised on Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara walls. It can be seen that Solius Mendis had taken great care in depicting costumes, furniture, backgrounds etc, true to its period.



'Defeat of Yakkas at Mahiyangana'
Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara by Solius Mendis

In more recent times, George Keyt painted a series of modern frescoes at Gothami Vihara in Colombo between 1939 and 1940. These large-scale paintings on the inner face of the outer wall of the Vihara portray 'Buddha Charithra' or life of Buddha reminiscent of the ancient works. Gothami Vihara had been built under the patronage Mr. Harold Peiris in memory of his grand mother. The well-known architect Andrew Boyd prepared its walls.

Up to 17 events from Buddha's life including invitations of the gods, dream of queen Mahamaya, birth of prince Siddhartha, renunciation of homely life, crossing of river Anoma, defeat of mara, first sermon, parinirwana or passing away are portrayed in large scale panels up to 1.8 metres in height. They are to be viewed, moving in a clockwise direction starting from the main entrance doorway in keeping with the sittara tradition.



'Dream of Mahamaya'
Gothami Vihara Colombo by George Keyt

Basic elements of wall paintings as applied to Kandyan style are :

Flowers

Flowers are not drawn from nature but modified by artist Examples are:
'Kathiri Mala', Lotus, Kadupul and
'Palapeti' which were widely used on edges and on corners.

Traditional borders

Developed from geometric forms:
Pineapple flower, 'Val pota' Used in pillars and ceilings, 'Liyapata', Liyapath design and Lotus flowers.

Lotus flowers were especially used on ceilings, also to fill up empty spaces. 'Pujavali' refers to a '*devotee who constructed a temple in honour of Buddha Ratna and got it painted with a thousand lotus flowers shining for ever like the sun, moon and the stars above*'. This refers to the ceiling.

Figures of birds

Swan was the most popular bird in the paintings, even from the Anuradhapura period.

Swan was featured prominently in temples as evidenced in moonstones. Popular bird designs from Gampola and Kandyan period artists are;

Hansa puttu (or twin swans or some times 4 swans are joined together which are called Hansa – puttu). Bherunda - An eagle with twin heads, Parrot, and Salapinda - a mythical bird with a head of a lion

Lion figures

Lion was always given prominence wherever possible. Ananda Coomaraswamy noted that although 'Rupavali' as an ancient treatise on art describes only 16 types of lions, Sinhalese artist knew 32 types

Some of them are;

Lion with a sword, Gaja Sinha – Lion with an elephant head, Lion with a whip, Lion with a creeper and Twin lions with a single face were called Keshara Sinha

Female Figures – Nari Ru

Great attention has been paid in drawing the female figure especially during the Kandy and Gampola periods; various forms of female figures were used as decorative motifs. Most famous of these is the 'Nari latha'. It is believed that 'Nari Latha' is a flowering creeper in the Himalayan mountain range. Flowers of this creeper is said to resemble the face of a young woman; hence it was called 'Liya thambara'.

I would like to quote again from one of our 'Sandesha Kavya'

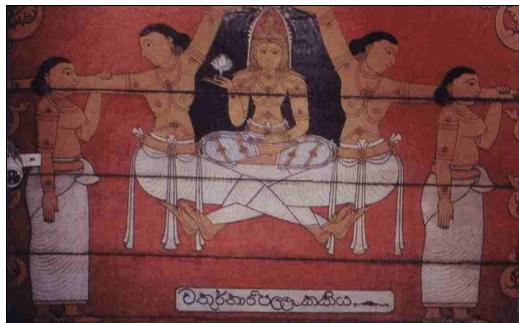
"Sathekin pavan Ambakola budina thavasara Dahanin mideth dutu leladena liya thambara".

Even the ascetic who consumes mango leaves tends to lose his state of mind when confronted with a wavering Liyathambara flower.

Variations of Nari form are

Nari Devi – Goddess Nari, Nari lata, . Pancha Nari Ghataya – created by 5 female

figures, the dancing form of Nari and Liya Kinduri. 'Sapta Nari Pallaki' – was drawn by Kandyan artists using 7 female figures



'Chaturnari Pallaki' - Dalada Maligawa



'Nari Lata' figures
Dalada Maligawa Kandy

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8. Mahawamsa

Truth will out

by Kay Goonatilleke

My husband worked a lifetime unravelling some of the challenging crime cases in Sri Lanka in his time, always seeking the truth. But as fate would have it, he was himself subjected to a most atrocious false case in London. It was at the end of a long and daunting fight that his name was cleared and the truth established. This is a story that brings home the often-repeated maxim that truth is stranger than fiction.

It was March 1982, in UK, and on that sunny cold morning my husband and I set out to buy a gift for our friend's son. Our visit to London was for my husband Tyrell, to have open-heart surgery. Once the surgery was over, the surgeon advised my husband to try and lead as normal a life as possible. That morning, we went down Oxford Street and stepped into a Department store. I was browsing through the ladies' clothing area on the first floor, while Tyrell, went down to the basement to the hardware section.

A few minutes into this shopping area I was accosted and startled by two gentlemen asking for my name. One spoke out and said 'you will be surprised by what your husband had done!' My first reaction was to ask them 'has he fainted?' I was then taken upstairs and it was soon apparent that a store detective was accusing Tyrell of shoplifting.

It was a nightmare from then on. Back

**Tough times don't last,
Tough people do**

home in Sri Lanka, gossip hit fever pitch. This story was the most whispered gossip doing the rounds in the country. It was the end of

joie de vivre' for Tyrell, the three children and me. We had to live it out, and determined we were going to do so. As a senior Police Officer in Charge of the CID he was in the fulcrum of events in the country. In the course of his work he made many friends and many enemies as well. There were many that would have loved to hate him.

Tyrell also had many friends in Scotland Yard. He worked on some of the most sensational cases of the time, and it brought him into contact with the higher echelons of Scotland Yard. He was respected at the Yard for his untiring efforts and meticulous capacity to probe every minute detail in an investigation.

These investigations very often crossed national boundaries. The Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard, had in fact, given his visiting card to me and asked me to contact him in the event of our needing any help, especially because of Tyrell's open-heart surgery.



Tyrell Goonatilleke

Harking back to the department store we soon found ourselves in separate Police vans heading to the Marylebone Police Station. We were held *'incommunicado'* in two separate rooms for questioning. My appeals to make a telephone call were turned down. It was about 3 p.m and rather dark as is usual in London. From where I was, I could see the road down Marylebone Street. At first opportunity, I rang our friend the Asst. Commissioner in Scotland Yard.

Tyrell was determined to prove his innocence and refused to admit to a crime he never committed. The gut question was how do we do that. The charge made by the store detective was that Tyrell had stolen some garden equipment from the department store. The ground reality was that he did nothing of the sort. When his honesty is in question, Tyrell can be as tough as

old Police boots. We both hoped that the truth would prevail at the end but feared the worst. With desperation as the spur we wanted to go the full hog.

Back again to Sri Lanka, the feedback we were getting was that Tyrell was being relegated to the dustbin of history. While some of his friends, who knew him, stood by his good name, there were many within and outside the Police who thought he was an irrelevant footnote from then on, and wrote him off. Many did not want to even hear his side of the story with all the arrogance that ignorance can muster. His career seemed to have ended in a *cul de sac*. He was convicted by innuendo reminiscent of the Spanish Inquisition even before the trial started. His enemies devoured Tyrell's humiliation with carnivorous glee. Only a few friends consoled us, asking us not to panic. But, that is what they said on the Titanic too. Tyrell had no political patrons either; he always upheld the law and refused to be a ventriloquist's dummy perched on some politician's knee.

The case was heard in the Magistrate's court where the shop detective lied like a Trojan and was very economical with the truth. Tyrell was convicted, but he appealed. The appeal came up before the Crown Court, and after two days of legal arguments and deliberations an order of absolute discharge was made. We wanted an acquittal to clear his name, but returned home. The sword of Damocles was still hanging over us. During this time we also learnt who our true friends were, as many shunned us. The UN Office in Colombo, where I worked, was extremely kind. Not only did they grant me leave but also collected funds and sent it to us to meet the costs of the case.

The case evoked much interest and even the highest quarters made funds available for Tyrell to fight the case and clear his name. Even overseas friends came to his rescue financially. The cost of fighting a case overseas, to clear one's name, is best imagined

than described. The two daughters at home suffered immense pain of mind. The elder of the two had to bear the brunt of it as she simply hid all what had happened from the younger one who was sitting for her advanced level exam. Our country being a small island, and my husband being a well-known police officer, all sorts of ugly rumours spread very fast and these two girls had to face the entire trauma.

The eldest who lived in Boston immediately flew down with her little son and joined us while we were still in London. The courage shown by the three daughters gave my husband a shot in the arm to prove his innocence as he constantly told me that he would never want his grandchildren to be told, "your grandfather shoplifted".

True to his belief, not even three months later, if I remember right, on October 26, 1982 our friend from Scotland Yard rang us to say the store detective who accused my husband was caught stealing. He had been stealing from the very same store and on searching his home the Police found several stolen goods from the department store of which he was a security employee. He had been doing this for a number of years.

The time to reopen the case had lapsed, but an up and coming brilliant young lawyer, known to us, took up a writ of *Certiorari* and the case went up to the Appeal Court in the UK and it was accepted. The case was reopened, and the case was argued for two days. At the end of it, the judges made an order, to the effect that the Lower court was unable to come to a decision because of the inaccuracy of the information made available to them. This became an important case law, and an excerpt of the judgment has been published in the February 14th New Law Report (*Regina vs. Knightsbridge Crown Court and another Ex parte Goonatilleke*). The maximum allowable amount was paid as compensation to Tyrell, and even more rewarding was a public apology given by the Courts.

It was a strange coincidence that the previous day before this traumatic incident my husband and I watched a TV program. One of the ministers at that time, spoke about shop lifting being foisted on unsuspecting shoppers, and advised that one should never plead guilty to a crime they did not commit. He said, that store detectives often accuse innocent people as they are rewarded according to the number of detections they made.

Tyrell received many letters of congratulations for the example he had set. So many others, who were accused unjustly in similar fashion, simply admitted to guilt out of fear. He also received a letter from the Magistrate's Court expressing their regret at the travesty of Justice he had to endure. This case brings home many a message. Tough times don't last, tough people do.

The Hamilton Case. By
Michelle de Kretser. Knopf,
369 pp., \$29.95



Book Review by Yasmine Gooneratne

His mother Maud a tireless huntress of beasts and of men (including the Prince of Wales, whose performance, she reported, was 'mediocre'), his father 'Ritzy' a spendthrift descendant of Sinhalese mudaliyars, his sister Claudia a helpless bundle of fears and neuroses, Stanley Alban Marriott Obeysekere, godson of a British Governor of colonial Ceylon, is at once the unhappy product and the proud symbol of colonialism. His creator, Michelle de Kretser, was born in Sri Lanka, and emigrated with her family to Australia at the age of 14. She reveals in this book a gift for mimicry that is only equalled by 'Sam' Obeysekere's own tendency to think, act, and even feel on the lines laid down by his colonial masters. "Obey by name, obey by nature," as a school mate at Neddy's (the novel's substitute for St Thomas's College) scornfully describes him. That school mate, 'Jungle'

Jayasinghe, has read the signs of the times better than Sam has, and while Sam ends the novel stranded in his home at Allenby House, giving sad little parties to celebrate Empire Day, Jaya leaps on to the nationalist bandwagon, as the recognizable politician of a future fraught with racist slogans and ethnic violence.

De Kretser draws a vivid portrait of 1930s Ceylon that is lively and constantly satisfying, packed with authentic detail and kaleidoscopic in the way it mirrors multiple aspects of a complex society in the process of transition. It's genuinely funny, too - consider this passage, an account of Obey's parents' marriage:

[Ritzy] knew nothing of jealousy. He kept a florist in a flat in Bambalapitiya, a liaison that pre-dated his marriage. Well-wishers hastened to apprise his 19-year old bride of the arrangement. Maud opened the Obeysekere Bible to the family chronicle recorded at the back and dragged a heavy black line through the details of her marriage. *A hideous mistake*, she wrote above it.

"But what can I do, old thing?" said Ritzy. "Jilt poor Nesta?" He swore it had been years since the florist and he did anything but play cards with her bathchair-bound mother. "Rummy with Mummy. What's the harm?"

In the middle section of the text (literally at the heart of the novel) is an account of a murder of a tea planter named Hamilton on an upcountry estate. This fictional crime, which resonates throughout the book, has its roots in a famous legal case of the period in which the author's late father, Justice O. L. de Kretser, appeared with others for the prosecution. The author affirms that her father's account of the subject, titled *The Pope Murder Case*, is 'one of the ghosts' that haunt her own imagined creation; and if you are an addict of fictional murder mysteries and case histories of real-life legal proceedings, you will enjoy hunting down other such 'ghosts' in Agatha Christie's classic novel

(Continued from page 22)

Hercule Poirot's Christmas and A.C. Alles's *Famous Criminal Cases of Sri Lanka* (one volume of which contains an edited version of the Pope case).

Obey and his college mate Shivanathan, both lawyers, voluntarily involve themselves in various aspects of the sensational 'Hamilton Case'. They assist in or comment on the handling of the affair by the local police superintendent, Conrad Nagel. As a result of their efforts, blame for Hamilton's murder, which is initially believed to have been committed by Tamil workers on his estate, shifts to another English planter (Taylor), with far-reaching consequences as regards the individual careers of the two Ceylonese lawyers. To reveal more of the plot in a review would be inexcusable, and for that reason I shall stop at this point, only inviting readers not to miss the opportunity of reading this fascinating book and finding out 'what happened next' as regards the death of planter Hamilton.

Just as interesting, however, is the story of the unexplained deaths that occur in Sam Obeysekere's own family. 'There are instabilities that appear in old families like flaws in the finest china', Sam is obliged to remind his sister Claudia, whose neurotic behaviour has become a tedious embarrassment to him. But that is not really enough to explain the grisly deaths of two infants and Claudia's own suicide. Despite the arresting setting for its events provided by the island's lush landscape and the prodigal beauties of nature, the book is haunted inescapably by tragedy, by a sense of wrong choices that the characters have made, and by an impression that they could not, given the times in which they lived, have acted differently.

This is a thoughtful, intelligent book that goes beyond crime fiction and skeletons in family cupboards to explore the links between history and individual lives. It also makes a valuable point about fictions set in

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BOOKSHOP AND WEB RESOURCES

BOOKS/MAPS/COLLECTIBLES

This column is a regular feature for the benefit of members who publish works, and others who wish the Society to sell material on their behalf. No charges apply to members but donations will be gratefully received. Others pay a handling charge of 10%. Please e-mail the editor if you wish to take up this offer

George Steuart & Co Ltd 1952-1973: A Personal Odyssey - Tony Peries. \$ 20. Contact Tony on 02 9674 7515

Hills of Paradise - by Dr Shiva Breckenridge 305pp, hard cover \$ 40.00 + \$ 5.00 p&h, contact Treasurer.

Celebrating Sri Lankan Women's English Writing 1948-2000 - by Yasmine Gooneratne Publisher: Women's Education & Research Centre, 58 Dharmarama Road, Wellawatte, Colombo 6 Paperback, 451 pp, price SL Rs. 850/- Contains bio-bibliographies, documentation, and analyses of the writing of some 70 Sri Lankan women authors.

The Way We Grew by D T Devendra - \$ 10.00 + \$ 3 p&h - call Sumane Iyer - 02 9456 4737

Arjuna's Atlas of Sri Lanka - Chief Editor T Somasekeran - \$ 37.00 + \$7 p&h - back order through Treasurer call number on page 30

Ceylon We Knew - by Vama Vamadevan - \$ 20 + \$3 p&h call Vama 02 9825 1542

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(Continued from page 23)

Sri Lanka by expatriate novelists that exploit the 'exotic' and sensational aspects of the 'mysterious orient' says Shivanathan, an exile in Canada, writing novels about his homeland that are acclaimed in the West.

An ash-smeared sadhu. The fragrance of cumin. I pulled them from my hat in earnest good faith when I first ventured into fiction. And my stories proved very popular with readers in the West. They wrote to tell me so. *Your work is so exotic. So marvellously authentic...* The coloniser returns as a tourist, you see. And he is mad for difference. That is the luxury we now supply, as we once kept him in cinnamon and sapphires. The prose may be as insipid as rice cooked without salt. No matter: call up a monsoon or the rustle of a sari, and watch him salivate.

In thus satirizing the familiar formula of the 'exotic' bestseller, Michelle de Kretser sketches a scenario that readers know only too well. Hopefully, more books of the quality of *The Hamilton Case* will emerge in the future as a welcome antidote to the sensationalism and exoticism that mar contemporary fiction set in Sri Lanka.

Yasmine Gooneratne is the author of two novels, *A Change of Skies* (1991) and *The Pleasures of Conquest* (1995). Her first collection of short fiction, *Masterpiece and Other Stories*, was published in 2002, and is now available in Sydney from Silicon Crafts Pty Ltd (Tel: 02 9899 2000).

White Mughals:

by William Dalrymple
Harper-Collins (2002) 580 Pages
ISBN 0 00 655096 7



Book Review by Vama Vamaderan

This book, described as '...the most touching love story to come out of India since Shah Jahan...' is a very absorbing historical story. It takes the reader to the dizzy heights of the

flourish of Mughal India. It adds a new dimension to the British rule of colonial India and takes the reader from the Boardrooms of the British East India Company into the bedrooms of its administrators of that era.

Dalrymple's penetrating book into the private lives in the administration will change the reader's views about British India. This is the love story of a Hyderabadi Princess and the English Resident James Kirkpatrick with the saddest consequences. The plot is interspersed with the regional politics of the Sultanate of Hyderabad in the Deccan and the discordant attitude of the different administrators.

This book is of topical interest at a time when Islamophobia is engulfing and sweeping across the west and it contradicts Rudyard Kipling's oft-repeated words 'the East is East and the West is West, and never the twain shall meet'.

Dalrymple is a rigorous researcher, an archival sleuth who embarks on an ambitious piece of revisionist history. Born in Scotland and a writer of many works and winning many awards, his life is divided between London and India. Anyone who fails to read this book is losing a rich reward as it opens a window into our own history in Sri Lanka.

A future writer might be able to explore the cobwebby crevices of the private lives of our own administrators in Sri Lanka. The likes of Governor Thomas Maitland (1805 – 1812) who is surmised to have been infatuated by a local lassie and built his residence at Lihiniyagala by the sea and named it Mt Lavinia. The story goes that he built a tunnel from Mt Lavinia to the lassie's home to facilitate his rendezvous with her. Apart from Governors, our own history is replete with 'transculturisation' between writers of repute such as John Still, G.K.Pippet, H.C.P.Bell, Le mesurier etc etc. and local women. This can be a theme for a future writer.

(Continued from page 14)

ing of Vijaya. Today, for security reasons the army has constructed a broader motorable road along this western perimeter. Whether that is to be a permanent feature has to be assessed. Wilpattu therefore has a lot to offer besides wild life. There are ruins, caves and inscriptions, and lots of prehistoric artefacts of chert and quartz. Perhaps the jungles have still to reveal all its secrets.

In the early days Wilpattu had just two small bungalows, Kalli Villu and Maradanmaduwa. The former was especially popular to observe elephants. Later many more bungalows were built and well located. Both old bungalows were extensively improved and new ones constructed at Kokmottai. Manavillu, Manikkapola Uttu and Pannikkar Villu. In addition the Wild Life Protection Society had their bungalow at Hunuwilagama near the entrance. In April 1971, just before the JVP uprising, we were in occupation of the Kokmottai bungalow. Of course we had no idea of what was to come. Whilst enjoying ourselves we noticed a daily movement of parties of men, which appeared unusual. This bungalow, by the way, is located at the NW extremity of the park, by the Moderagam Aru, which marks the northern boundary. We asked the bungalow keeper about these men and were told that they were contract labour on some project. After our stay there, a few days later, the insurgency took place. We learnt that Wilpattu was one of their bases and many were killed there and that the bungalow keeper was also arrested. We were very lucky indeed. All these lovely bungalows will need attention before the public can book them, but we are only too happy to have the park open. May it blossom and bloom again.

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R.L.Brohier - Discovering Ceylon - Lake House Investments 1971

“The Loris” Journal of The Wild Life & Nature Protection Society of Ceylon

Annual Reports-Director, Dept of Wild Life Conservation.



The Ozzie Athos, Porthos & Aramis on my deck -Ed

Kites, Kiting and Men

by Milton Fernando

Come September, most of us are willingly caught up in the ardent, age-old love affair- with strings attached. To- fly a kite.

Some join unwillingly to keep the children happy, others join, with ground realities and stark upmanship when the neighbours kite soars in to the skies on the Galle Face Green. It was also the time Charlie Joseph, the Sri Lankan Kite maker made soaring news. Charlie Joseph shipped a consignment of 500 kites to the USA. The Seattle Kite Store offered a set of seven Sri Lankan models for a bargain price of \$48.



The exotic Sri Lankan kites, a Flying Fish, Pecking Peacocks, riffling ravens, a Dancing Cobra and a Serendib Serpent made by Charlie Joseph, have caught the eye of connoisseurs far beyond our shores

and brought winds of fame and fortune to Charlie, Ravi and his ilk. Washington's KITELINE featured Slave Island's kite maker and his family of "kitists" in a two page spread in their summer 79' issue, captioned, HAND-CRAFTED MAGICAL KITES FROM SRI LANKA.

Valerie Govig writing for the Washington based Quarterly devoted to kites, kitists and kiting introduced Charlie Joseph as a master in geometric design and a competent craftsman who has modified and improved the centuries old techniques and designs of Sri Lanka. “The kites from the island of Sri Lanka are made from treated bamboo and covered with selected quality tissues and glasslike papers. They are uniquely designed and solely constructed out of natural materials,” said the editors. “Each kite has an adjustable bridle and is sup-

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Synopses of meetings

Sydney Sunday 18th May 2003

GARRISONS, GRIEF, AND REGIMENTAL HONOUR

The 73rd Regiment in Sri Lanka 1814 to 1821

A presentation by Robin Walsh, Curator, The Lachlan Macquarie Room, Macquarie University Library.

In this presentation, Robin Walsh sought to examine a selection of historical links between early colonial Australia and the colony of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by looking closely at the lives of Lachlan Macquarie and the soldiers and their families of the 73rd Regiment. Lachlan Macquarie had been in Ceylon between 1788 and 1807, and played an influential role in military affairs there.

Daniel Humm and d'Arcy Wentworth were two men of the 73rd Regiment who first-hand witnessed the cultural diversity prevailing in Ceylon in the early nineteenth century. (Their graves, incidentally, are to be found in the St Johns Cemetery in Parramatta off O'Connell Street – Lt. Col. Maurice O'Connell having been the Regimental Commander of the 73rd Regiment!). They were both first-generation Australians who had been dragooned into the 73rd Regiment and sent to Ceylon along with hundreds of other men and their families, very many of whom were never to return, having died of disease and/or the brutality that prevailed within British regimental life in those days. Their letters, along with numerous other documents, provided Mr Walsh with valuable insight into the lives and ethos of the day.

For instance, for most soldiers, acquiring booty was seen as being the only worthwhile outcome of the campaign! Falling prey to arrack was a very widespread phenomenon, leading to major problems of discipline for the British military administration. In fact, the British had expressed surprise at the quality of the personnel that had been seconded from Australia, as well as at the fact that family, who very often were as raucous and misbehaved as the men in uniform, accompanied soldiers!

It became apparent that the British held to a high level of arrogance about military etiquette – they utterly disdained the Sinhalese who adopted guerrilla methods of warfare, often shooting British soldiers from hiding-places in the jungle, rather than meeting the opposition “face-to-face in open field”! Perhaps also arising from this arrogance were the severe punishments meted out to offending soldiers, and the brutal regimens of drill, which were adopted to discipline and train the men. In addition to all this were the depredations of disease – perceived by the medics of the day as the result of

heat, humidity and fecundity of the environment, not germs and parasites! It was no wonder therefore, that the men were constantly seeking opportunities for themselves rather than demonstrating unwavering loyalty to the Crown.

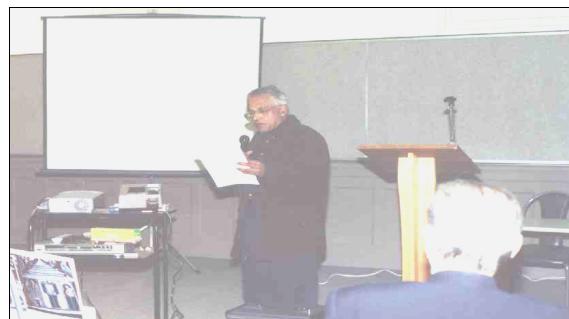
Chris Piachaud

Melbourne Sunday 25th May 2003

The Chairman, Dr Srilal Fernando introduced Prem Kumbukkage, an architect of two decades of experience in Sri Lanka who specialised in the study of ancient Buddhist architecture. Mr Kumbakkage had been particularly drawn to the paintings over several centuries old in Buddhist temples, which are gems of Sinhalese culture, and offered the audience a visual feast of slides and a video to illustrate and support his talk. The substance of his presentation on "Temple Paintings" appears elsewhere in an article in this issue.

His comments and illustrations ranged from the 7th century Hindagala temple at Peradeniya down through the centuries to the work of Solias Mendis in the Kelaniya Rajamahavihare between 1932 and 1946, and that of George Keyt who painted the mural in the Gotami Vihara at Borella between 1939 and 1940.

Two books which are required reading for all those who enjoyed Prem's talk and would like to pursue the subject further are: "The Rock and Wall Paintings of Sri Lanka" by Senake Bandaranayake published in 1986 and "Design Elements from Sri Lankan Temple Paintings" by L.T.P. Manjusri published in 1977.



Prem Kumbukkage addressing Melbourne Chapter

There was an interesting question and answer session after the presentation and the ingredients used to create the different colours in the paintings was an item that fascinated many in the audience.

Dr Fernando invited Prem to draw the winning raffle ticket which was held by Ratna Gurusinghe.

Shelagh Goonewardene

Some Lesser-known Ethnic Communities of Sri Lanka

Part 10

The Vanishing Veddahs

by Vama Vamadevan

The Veddahs are reputed to have lived in Sri Lanka for nearly 28,000 years. The few remaining Veddahs live along the Maha-oya road about 13 miles (21 KM) from Mahiyangana in a village called Dammane. The Veddahs are victims of civilisation. The accelerated Mahaweli program and other colonisation schemes pushed them out of their traditional hunting areas and decimated the few remaining tribes. The jungles were the areas they moved about freely without boundaries. The forests, which were their traditional hunting grounds, were logged, flooded, inundated and levelled. When the animals are driven away in this manner – you drive away the Veddahs too.

The Veddah philosophy is simple and straightforward. They believe they are creatures of the forest and believe their dead live with them and their spirits are still around, philosophies very much like that of the aborigines of Australia. Their lives are closely linked with the land. The plight of the Veddah is obvious when one reads that Tissahamy, the Veddah chief's eldest son Randunu Vanniya's brother-in-law, was threatened with a fine of Rs 10,000.00 some years ago for gathering honey in the jungle. This is the work of some over zealous Forest Officers. The harassment of the Veddahs comes in the wake of dwindling jungle land and government proposals to relocate them to make way for colonisation schemes.

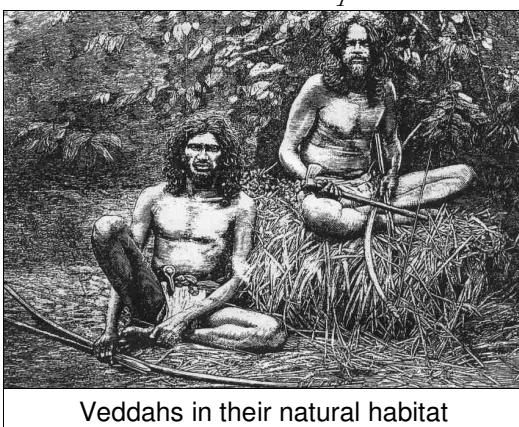
Of the population of 18 million in Sri Lanka, the official count is that there are only 2000 Veddahs or those claiming Veddah ancestry, are left. But most of them are not purebred Ved-

dahs. More than 65 years ago Dr. R.L.Spittel, stated *.. today no pure Veddah exist*. At the beginning of the 20th Century when a census was taken in 1911, there were 5331 Veddahs scattered over several locations in the Eastern Province, North-Central Province, North Western Province Central Province. At the 1946 census this number had come down to 2,361. But this too has now dwindled to just about 200 or 300 in the Badulla & Ampara districts.

Anthropologists, such as Seligmann couple and the Sarasin Cousins supported by R.L.Spittel are of the opinion that the Veddahs are an admixture of both the Australoid and the Negro races. They drifted into Sri Lanka and other parts before the sea level rose and the land continuity was disrupted.

At present, if any genuine Veddahs exist, indeed it must be only a minuscule number. The controversy whether they should be left in their primitive state to preserve their identity or whether they should be brought out and integrated with the rest of society is a vexatious question. Dr. R. L.Spittel was of the view *... our duty is to protect the Veddah from extinction, not as curiosities, but as citizens forming a distinct social group, until in a very few years racial admixture and social contact will complete their absorption into the dominant race and the word Veddah will only be a name..*

That stage seems to have already arrived.



Veddahs in their natural habitat

T.M. Gunasekera, schoolmaster at the Dammanna Senior School is the first graduate from the Veddah community. His mother is the niece of Urumarige Tissahamy.

He offered Sinhala, Economics and Geography for his degree. His graduation symbolises the transition the Veddahs have gone through and their integration into the mainstream social structure of Sri Lanka.

In the past Veddahs had names such as Handi, Poromola, Kaira Vanniya, Gombira etc. These names have given way to the infusion of Sinhala

names such as Gunadasa, Premadasa etc.

With the transformation of the Veddahs into the normal life of the country they are also being besieged by the usual problems. Confidence tricksters are inveigling them by false promises into 'Show business' in far away Colombo and Kataragama. They are made to participate in temple festivals and make appearances at Tourist resorts as curiosities. They are also being introduced to liquor, cigarettes and other habits alien to their culture and foisting on them the attendant corruption and degradation. Most of the earnings are siphoned off from them and at the end they return to their habitats with paltry sums of money while the organisers make good with the major part of the takings.

Veddahs had their own lingo and this has given way to Sinhala now. Their dance called the '*bathma*' is performed in September and invokes blessings on the community. It is also performed as a rain dance and conducted in a downpour at times. They also have the '*Kiriboraha*' Veddah dance to off set a lean hunting period. On such occasions, they invoke the blessings of the *Nae Yakka* (relative spirits). The Kirikoraha is supposed to appease the *Nae spirits*. Some of these dances can go on for many hours of chanting supplications to the desired spirits in sonorous and synchronizing voices. The drumbeat reverberates through the jungle stillness and stanzas are recited by the leader and chorused by the rest.

A Veddah home is a simple thatched shelter. In it one will find primitive bows and arrows and other hunting implements. Wood carvings of animals and hollow gourds serve as receptacles and may be filled with honey. Fruits and medicinal herbs are stored for their use and to sell. The first six months of the year they hunt in the jungle for game, which is their staple diet during that time of the year. They also feed upon various yams they find in the wilderness and earn money by collecting bees honey. Another article they sell is twisted elephant hair made into rings. There is a demand for this among Sinhalese villagers. The next six months are devoted to Chena cultivation and they are

especially fond of *Kurukkan* and corn. In their marriages they had some obsolete custom of two brothers marrying one woman. But generally their sexual morality is uncompromising and highly rigorous. Divorce or abandonment was rare.

The Veddahs living in the Eastern Province are called the Coast Veddahs. They are Veddahs in all sense of the term except that they live by fishing along the eastern coast. They don't go deep-sea fishing but fish in lagoons, tanks, ponds or even irrigation channels. Apart from crude nets, rattan baskets, rod and hooks they spear fish or use bow and arrows. The business end of the arrow is made lethal by crude nails. In the Eastern Province they are in places like Verugal, Sagamam, Panichchenkerni etc. Their religion is akin to Hinduism and they pray to a *Thoni Theivam* (Boat God) and to the Goddess Ammal and to dead ancestors.

In very early times when Veddahs were a more recognisable ethnic group in the 10th and 11th centuries they were very shy of foreigners. In that dim distant past, they are said to have indulged in what is called 'Silent trade'. This was a curious way of trading and is referred to by the Arabic geographer Alberuni in his eleventh century work, the 'silent trade' as carried on by these Veddahs. The Veddahs would sneak up to the shore during the night and leave the products of their forests with well-understood markings on the sand intimating what they wanted in exchange. The Arab trader would take the article left as payment, and leave the goods indicated by the Veddahs. The Veddah would return under cover of darkness and secretly remove the product. Neither the seller nor the buyer ever saw each other in this curious system of barter.

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Series concluded

(Continued from page 25)

plied with flying instructions," added GREAT WINDS.

Mel Govig, quoting Kim Conrad of Great Winds, Seattle's Kite Store wrote that since 1939 the kite maker has been crafting and selling his kite at one spot on Colombo's beach. Kite Sales to the USA have helped this man feed and clothe his family of 13 who live very simply in a small house.

Charlie Joseph has been on the Galle Face Green most of his mature life, selling his kites to many generations. A sixtyish man with much greying hair, he says that his kites won twice in competitions on the Green and won cash prices of Rs. 600 and Rs. 800. Man with shrewd business practices he keeps to a two-tiered tariff, one for the tourists and a relatively low rupee figure for his local clientele. A tourist enchanted by his craftsmanship and lured by his salesmanship may buy a kite for as high as \$6. He would be so gracious as to sell a similar soaring model for as low as Rs. 25. One of his Cobras with a long tail of 44 feet was quoted at Rs. 40. Charlie Joseph's Dancing Cobra may not be as large as the kite built in Naruto City, Japan in 1936, weighing 8 1/2 tons with 3100 panes of paper and held the record as large as the largest hand-launched kite of 91 feet built by Mr and Mrs Don Shearing of California. Certainly, four of Charlie's Cobras would easily span the width of Galle Face Green from edge to edge.

Nearly 300 of Charlie's kites are exported annually and he had a steady market with Washington's GREAT WINDS. While Charlie holds one end of the Galle Face Green market Ravi, his son, a dark young man of 21, married, and now living separately, keeps the other end of the Green. The Police have a time limiting the duels that develop as fast as the dashing waves. Imposing strictures to control the competing cartels they have designed a spot for each kite seller, including the father and the son.

This Ravi Shankar also strums the strings. But not on the Sitar. Ravi, had a distasteful recol-

lection of the Chinese. Not just China, but Korea, Japan and Malaysia have an age-old affection with the (IFOs), identifiable flying objects.

A 9th century Buddhist monk exclaimed, " My kite rises to celestial regions, my soul enters the abode of bliss". Kites over the South Asian region's skies have dared the heavens for thousands of years pacifying the gods or protecting souls.

Dinesh Bahadur, Kite Fighting Champion of India, then a kites promoter in San Francisco was equally ecstatic in trying to link heaven and earth- with just one string. " It is close to being in love. When you are in love you can't explain it. But the two lovers know what's going on. The kite touches your heart and soul, through your hand".

In more down to earth purposes romantic or practical kites have been used to relay lovers' messages across the fence, like the Korean General of yore, to send inspiring signals to troops, to build bridges and to advertise corsets.

Benjamin Franklin used a kite and a key to demonstrate the electrical nature of lightning. A kite line was used for starting the building of the suspension bridge at Niagara Falls. Guglielmo Marconi successfully sent a radio signal across the Atlantic Ocean in 1901. The man-lifting model developed by Scout Master, Baden-Powel was used in the Boer War.

Through dynasties of China, Han or Hang, into the space age, kites made of leaves, paper, silk, now plastic and synthetics have also been used to catch fish, spy on enemies, divine the weather, photograph the earth, tow boats, loft men and women into the wind to drop bombs.

Sydney's Lawrence Hargrave, 1894, invented the box kite which contributed much to the development of early aeroplanes. At South of Sydney Stanwell Park, Hargrave is supposed to have taken off in a seat mounted under three box-kite gliders and lifted into the air

with the wind as his sole motive power. With a monument in place, the South Sydney site is now a popular hang- gliding launch base. It was a short step from kites, hang-gliders to aeroplanes. Man's fancy for flight was indomitable.

With innumerable identifiable flying objects (IFOS) over the cloudless clear sky, I watched Ravi Shankars' kites playing in the winds- soaring heaven-wards. They kept swooping and bobbing. Ravi pulled out another cobra from the bag. Washington's GREAT WINDS named it SERENDIB SERPENT.

As the whirring and hissing reel got uncoiled the snaky serpent soared into the sky, undulating, whence he tied it to a peg. Just then a bat and a peacock plummeted like deflated dirigibles.

That is the way with kites. For one long minute they soar high in the sky. Next brief moment they come crashing down cracking bamboo bones and ripping paper. Just like the ups and downs of life.

(Resuscitated from a 1980 October 11 article in the Observer Saturday Magazine by the author, in fond memory of *BITE NANA*, long time vendor on the Green, who met with a tragic death recently. Bite Nana was a familiar figure on the Galle Face Green, as familiar as Charlie Joseph.)



REMINDER MEMBERSHIP DUES

There are some members still in arrears of 2002 subscriptions. Please see enclosed individual reminder. 2003 subscriptions are now due. Kindly draw your cheque/MO in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia and mail to Rienzie Fonseka—25 Clanwilliam Street—Eastwood NSW 2122 Please note subscriptions are for a calendar year.

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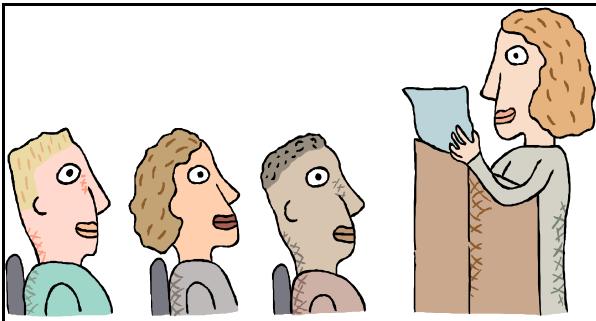
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NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

Sunday 26th October 2003 at 6.30 p.m

Dr Michael Roberts of the Department of Anthropology, University of Adelaide

Will speak on: "The Political Ideology of the Kandyan Kingdom"

Hornsby Bowling Club

22, Waitara Avenue
access only from Alexandria Parade

Meeting will be followed by a light supper. Volunteers offering plates please contact Social Convenor Chandra on 9872 6826

RSVP Hugh 9980 2494, Chris 9498 2158

NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING

Sunday 19th October 2003 at 5.00 p.m.

Venue: Holy Redeemer Church Hall
Cnr of York Street and Mont Albert Road
Surrey Hills VIC 3127
(Melways Ref: 46 H10)

**Martin Wickremasinghe
The Author, The Man**

Talk by

Nihal Henry Kuruppu

For further information please contact

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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 year is - April/May, 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

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