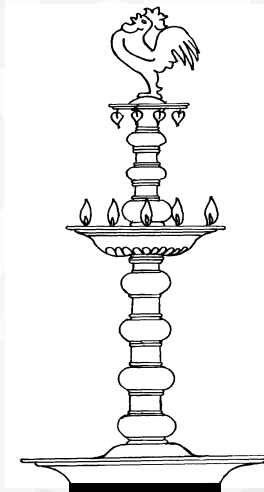


THE CEYLANKAN



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EDITORIAL



Another year is upon us as we notch up more mileage in our journalistic journey. The number of book reviews we keep receiving displays and encouraging trend in our members producing some great works. We hope there are many more putting pen to paper and would like to hear from them. This Journal whilst basking in the reflected glory is enriched by the reviews and would encourage the membership to support the authors and their efforts by adding these works to their libraries.

Whilst we celebrate the writers let us not forget the others who enrich our lives. In the last issue and the current we have paid tribute to two great artists, Lionel Wendt and now David Paynter, we would like to reiterate a request made in this editorial sometime ago regarding musicians. Very little has been said in these columns about these stalwarts who contributed to our cultural fabric. Rambler in this issue has reawakened this subject by tracing the history of a Student Orchestra, albeit western classical. Perhaps our members/readers have information (an old collection stacked away in that box in the garage) which may contain valuable insight into lives and works of indigenous artists. Let us hear from you. Reader participation is the way to grow this Journal—your Journal.

19th Century Images



Kandyan Adigar

The People and Homes on Thurstan Road & Cambridge Place - Fifty Years ago

by The Rambler

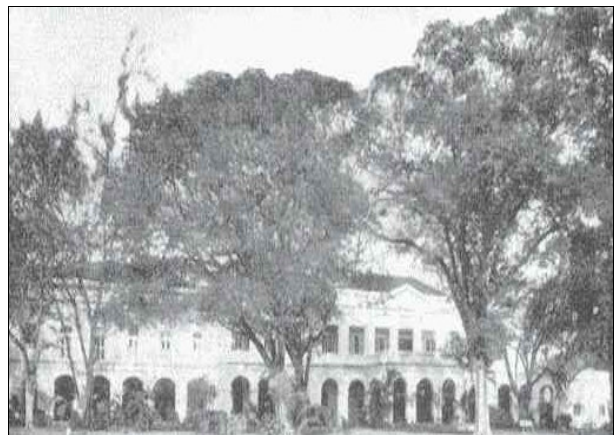
Fifty years ago, the Thurstan Road-Cambridge Place thoroughfare was one of the most picturesque in Colombo. It was lined on either side with gigantic specimens of the flamboyant or flame of the forest tree (*poinciana regia*) and the saman tree (*samanea saman*), which provided a shady and restful canopy over the road. During the months of April and May when the avenue of trees was in full bloom, this stretch of road was most colourful and attractive and indeed a magnificent spectacle, a remarkable living legacy from the spacious days of the past. Those were the days when Colombo was renowned the world over as the “garden city of the east”

It is believed that the trees were planted around 1920 following a report by Professor Patrick Geddes who was commissioned by the government of the day to recommend a master plan for the development of Colombo. He had a vision for Colombo, which included trees, greenery, and open spaces. Sometime in the nineteen forties members of the Orchid Circle of Ceylon took the initiative of adding further colour to the environment provided by the trees, by planting varieties of epiphytic orchids on the branches of the larger trees. Specimens of *cymbidium bicolor*, *vanda tessellata*, and *dendrobium superbiens* could to this day be seen among the trees that survive along this once beautiful avenue.

Thurstan Road (since renamed Munidasa Cumararatunge Mawata, after the well known Sinhalese author and poet) commences at its intersection with Reid Avenue, and ends at the roundabout connect-

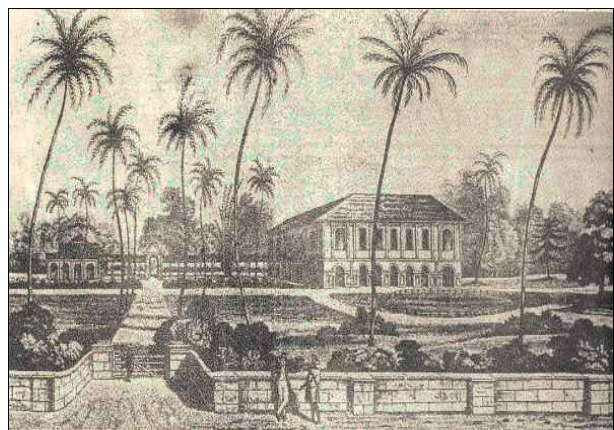
ing Flower Road. Cambridge Place continues northwards from this point, and ends at its intersection with Edinburgh Crescent, now known as Sir Marcus Fernando Mawata.

Thurstan Road was once the eastern boundary of the estate originally known as Bagatelle, and renamed later as Alfred House. The Fergusons Directory of 1871 lists Bagatelle as a cinnamon cum coconut estate of 125 acres. As the history of Alfred House has a significant bearing on the



Alfred House

stately homes that exist on Thurstan Road to this day, a brief examination of its past would seem appropriate. The property was



Bagatelle Walauwwa

first advertised for sale in the Ceylon Government Gazette of March 9 1822 as “a thatched cottage with a tent roof, about two miles and half from the Fort of Co-

lombo, to be disposed of by private contract.” The owner at the time was believed to be a prominent businessman in the Fort with the quaint name Daddy Parsee. Charles Edward Layard the third son of the Dean of Bristol arrived in Ceylon in 1803. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service in 1804 and served until 1839. It is not clear whether he owned Bagatelle Estate, but it is evident that he resided there, the thatched cottage having been replaced by a substantial two-storied bungalow at the time of his occupation. Many of Layard’s children were born in Bagatelle House, and it is on record that the youngest of Layard’s 26 children, named Barbara, was born in Bagatelle in 1834. The Ceylon Almanacs of the 1840s lists Bagatelle Estate as a property owned by Arbuthnot and Co, who were agents for the Government of Ceylon in India, and who were the sole exporters of cinnamon from Ceylon, which was a government monopoly at the time. Around 1858 Susew de Soysa, a pioneer native plantation owner became the owner of Bagatelle Estate, which was thereafter called Bagatelle Walauwwa. His nephew Charles Henry de Soysa to whom the property passed on, demolished the old homestead and built a magnificent home comprising of around 100 rooms. This was the location of a historic dinner that was accorded by the De Soysas to the Duke of Edinburgh when he visited Ceylon in 1870. The house was named Alfred House with the permission of Prince Alfred, the Duke. C.H. de Soysa died in 1890, and his wife in 1914, leaving a large family of 14 sons and daughters to inherit an enormous estate which in addition to Alfred House included several thousand acres of coconut, tea and rubber lands spread around the island.

Over the years, the 125 acre Alfred House Estate underwent several sub divisions, some major changes being precipitated by the master plan for Colombo which foresaw many new roads across the estate. The

earlier sub divisions were however made by the De Soysa family itself, which constructed several stately mansions within the property.

The ornate Lakshmigiri which was built in 1910 by A.J.R. de Soyas, the second son of C.H. de Soysa, is a classic example of extravagant building design of the time. This house with its extensive gardens and massive cast iron gates is at the southern end of Thurstan Road bordering Queens Road. It bears assessment No 102



Lakshmigiri House

Thurstan Road and is much the same fifty years ago, as it was when constructed almost half a century earlier. A few years after it was built, the house was mortgaged, and later foreclosed. It was then bought by the Adamjee Lukmanjee family and has remained in their ownership to date under the name Saiffee Villa. Fifty years ago there were no buildings between Saiffee Villa and Queens Road. Adjoining Queens Road is the house originally named Regina Walauwwa by its owner T. H.A. de Soysa, the 4th son of C.H. de Soysa. It was named after his wife Regina, and was built in 1912. An imposing building with multiple roofs, turrets, and towers it was a palatial residence facing Thurstan Road. The owner was a keen turfite owning many horses, and with a penchant for heavy wagers. The story goes that whenever he won over Rs 100, 000 at the races,

he would hoist the family flag on the large flagstaff in front of the house to indicate to all and sundry that he had made a killing at the races. This ritual was locally referred to as “*Lakseta kodiya*” meaning “win a lakh of rupees and the flag goes up”. Fortunes do however fluctuate, and by 1920 he was in financial difficulties and the house sold to the newly emerging University College. It was then renamed College House. The flagstaff or ‘*kodigaha*’ remains on the property to this day.



College House

On the opposite side of Thurstan Road was the University of Ceylon buildings constructed in 1913 as the home of Royal College. The school occupied the premises till 1923 when it was acquired by the Ceylon University College. Royal College later moved to the new premises on Racecourse Avenue, where it functions to this day. Next to College House is a property extending to over 3 acres, purchased from the De Soysa family in 1926 by the Imperial Bank of India. It was earlier used as the dairy for Alfred House. The Bank commissioned Walker and Sons to construct an impressive residence for its manager, and the house was named “Carlowrie”. In the mid 1950s it was acquired by the Government of India as the official residence for its High Commissioner, and has since been called “India House”. Many distinguished visitors have

been entertained here, including Prime Minister Nehru, and later his daughter Indira Gandhi who have planted trees in commemoration of their visits, in its spacious gardens. Adjoining India House were two bungalows belonging to Brooke Bonds Ceylon Ltd, the tea company. Hammerfaest was at No 80 Thurstan Road and was the residence of its Managing Director H. Broome. In the adjoining home lived his Deputy Roy Collins, and later S. E. Satarasinghe. At No” 76 was Chitrakala one time residence of Percy Gunasena of M.D. Gunasena and Co. whose mortgage on the property was foreclosed by the bank.

Next to the University property was Thurstan College established in 1949 in the premises earlier used by the Government Training College, prior to its shift to Maharagama. Adjoining Thurstan College was Royal Primary School, whose Headmaster Major A.F. de Saa Bandaranaike resided in the official bungalow at No 13. Mr J.C.A. Corea the Principal of Royal College occupied the adjoining bungalow. The buildings and grounds of Royal Primary School stood next. Around fifty years ago the school was under the Headmastership of Mr H.D. Sugathapala and Mr H.P. Jayewardene under whose leadership the well facilitated school hall known as “Navaranghala” was built. It acquired a permanent place in the history of the island, when the constituent assembly con-



India House

vened to draft the 1972 Constitution, was held there. It was also the occasion for the change of name from Ceylon to Sri Lanka. On the opposite side of Thurstan Road facing Thurstan College were the ends of Bagatelle Road and Alfred Place conjoining at the intersection with Thurstan Road. At this point along Thurstan Road were a few commercial buildings including a small restaurant known as “Villas” a haunt of generations of Royal College students who dropped in after school for a ‘cuppa’ often combined surreptitiously with a cigarette. Many were the abortive raids conducted by the college prefects in attempts to rein in the offending delinquents. Next door was Thurstan Café run by Noel Perera. Further on towards Flower Road, near Pedris Road was the home of K.H.M. Fernando, who owned a successful motor spares shop in the Pettah. Adjoining Pedris Road was the home of Mrs A. Wijewardene. Her son, the entrepreneur Upali Wijewardene who disappeared tragically in his Learjet in 1982, built his house designed by Geoffrey Bawa in part of the land in the 1970s. Her sons-in-law Dr Attygalle and Prof Stanley Wijesundera the latter killed during the JVP insurgency of 1989 also lived in houses within the same property. Adjoining was the entrance to 5th Lane, which was neighbouring the dental clinic of Dr Ian de Silva. Next-door was the home of the General Manager of the Shell Co P.D. Finn. The house there was built on a property, which was earlier known as “the Monastery”

The roundabout here links Thurstan Road on the south, Cambridge Place on the north, Racecourse Avenue on the East, and Flower Road on the west. Racecourse Avenue in its entirety on one side provided boundaries to Royal College and Royal Primary School.

At its western end was the Orient Club founded in 1894, and at one time an exclusive social club for the elites of Colombo.

Its tennis courts border the southern end of Cambridge Place, near the roundabout. On the opposite side of Cambridge Place at No 32 was the home of Sherman de Silva, the proprietor of a well-known produce company of the time. Adjoining was the large home earlier called Cambridge House and later renamed Florence House when Sir Wilfred de Soysa, the sixth son of C.H. de Soysa, occupied it. Sir Wilfred’s sons Bishop Harold, Terrence, Cecil, Ryle, Anura, and Lalith, all grew up in this



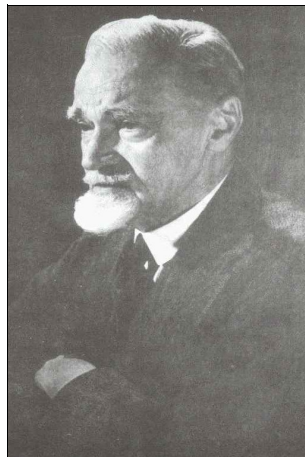
Sir Wilfred de Soysa

home, and were later to acquit themselves with great credit in adult life, whether it be business, sports, or in the “service of the Lord”. Ryle was for many years the opening batsman for the Ceylon

Cricket team then known as “The All Ceylon Cricket Team”. As a schoolboy at Royal College he was a member of the unbeaten Royal team that toured Australia in 1938. Florence House stood on a large extent of land. It was demolished in the 1950s to give way to a cluster of large bungalows and a new roadway named Cambridge Terrace. Adjoining Florence House was Mackinnon House the official home of the Managing Director of Mackinnon Mackenzie and Co the well known shipping agents. H.W. Tatham lived in this house situated in a large garden enclosed by a high wall. In the late 1950s Mr George Chitty the very successful criminal lawyer purchased this house and named it Goodwood. A humanist and a lover of people and company, he was a man of varied interests, and was an expert on cameras and photography, music, art, forensic medicine, woodwork, and motorcars. He led the successful prosecution in the Bandaranaike Assassination Case, at

the invitation of the Crown. As in all neighbourhoods, romance is always in the air, and it was no different in Thurstan Road. His son Ajit married Rapti, the daughter of Y.D. Gundevia the Indian High Commissioner who lived in India House on Thurstan Road, thus linking the two roads Thurstan and Cambridge by marriage! Two doors next to Goodwood was "St Catherine" the home of C.H.Z. Fernando whose father C.M. Fernando was a son in law of C.H. de Soysa of Alfred House. D.J. Wimalasurendra who pioneered hydroelectric schemes in Ceylon earlier owned St Catherine's. At the end of Cambridge Place fronting Edinburgh Crescent was "Lynwood" the home of Francis Amarasuriya a popular race horse owner of the time. His elder son Rukman ended his life tragically, at an early age, committing suicide in 1957 in Nuwara Eliya.

Facing the Museum on the opposite side in Cambridge Place, in a house called "Brentham" lived Leslie de Saram the head of the legal firm F.J. and G de Saram. He sold the house to the Australian Government, which purchased it for its embassy. Leslie de Saram was a remarkable man known for his generosity and many acts of philanthropy. He was educated at Royal College, and Clifton College in England, but gifted Gurutalawa Farm of 35 acres of cultivated land, and buildings, to St Thomas College, which established a branch school there. He also gifted his unique collection of rare antiques to the University of Ceylon, when it established at Peradeniya, and was described as "the greatest benefactor and friend the Ceylon University ever had" After his retirement he settled all his affairs in Ceylon and migrated first to England and later to Australia where he lived in Canberra.



Leslie de Saram

Next to Brentham was "Oakleigh" the home of another legal luminary F.C. Rowan the senior Partner of Julius and Creasy. Rowan was the advisor and confidante to almost every leading mercantile firm in Colombo in the 1950s. Further down Cambridge Place at "The Eyds" lived Stanley de Saram the brother of Leslie, and no less remarkable. He was also a partner of the family firm of de Saram's but in 1946 relinquished it to take up a position as a Director of Leechman and Co, an Agency House, the first Ceylonese to be invited to the position. He later became the first Ceylonese Chairman of the firm. Stanley and his wife were well known personalities in the mercantile world of that era, and were renowned for their legendary hospitality. Stanley and his wife at "The Eyds" who became close friends of the De Sarams hosted Lady Churchill on a visit to Ceylon in 1953. Later, Sir Winston and Lady Churchill played host to the De Sarams when they were asked to dinner at their home in Chartwell. After Stanley's death in the 1970s, "The Eyds" was demolished and several new homes have come up on its grounds. Somewhere between "The Eyds" and Oakholme stood a house called Gresham, which has since been altered structurally. At around this area in Cambridge Place, was the intersection with Edinburgh Crescent. Further on, adjoining the Orient Club was the Women's International Club.



Stanley de Saram

The Thurstan Road /Cambridge Place belt still remains a salubrious area of Colombo, but its quiet and leafy environment may not be the same as it was fifty years ago, as the Student population in the educational triangle, which it adjoins, has expanded dramatically, making the area a traffic controller's

nightmare during school hours.

Mercifully, the commercial sprawl that is evident in most areas of Colombo has spared its blight here, and Thurstan Road and Cambridge Place together with its immediate environs, are still an absolutely charming area within Colombo.

(The writer wishes to acknowledge assistance given by Vinodh Wickremaratne, a fellow "streetscape connoisseur" especially in verifying the location of properties some of which have long since gone to dust)

Kalutara: A Hidden History

by B H Spencer Roberts

If you go to Kalutara today, it will impress you as being just another busy, coastal town where there are a few beach hotels. However, this initial impression is misleading, for should you probe into the township's past you will uncover a fascinating history, which is very old indeed.

Kalutara stands at the mouth of the Kalu Ganga, a picturesque river on the south – west coast of Sri Lanka. The beauty of the waterway was extolled by Ernst Haeckel in 1882. In his book, "A Visit To Ceylon", the German scientist and philosopher described the estuary of the Kalu Ganga as being, ".....as wide as the Rhine at Cologne."

The history of Kalutara preceded colonialism in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) by many centuries. Apparently, in the 11th Century A.D, a Pandya prince named Vikkamapandu made Kalutara his capital. C.W Nicholas and S. Paranavitana in their book, "A Concise History of Ceylon", refer to the fore-

going fact as follows: - "Vikkamapandu, a Pandya prince, who through fear of the Colas had taken up his abode in the Dulu country, came to Ruhuna after Mahalanakitti's death and established himself as ruler with his seat at Kalutara:....."

Furthermore, King Parakramabahu II, in the 13th century, had land around Kalutara cultivated with coconut. Again, according to Nicholas and Paranavitana, this cultivation was necessary to increase the food supply in the region to accommodate a flood of refugees from Rajarata whose eating habits were different. Therefore, coconut was planted by state decree for the oil, which substituted for the ghee and sesame oil the refugees could not procure in their new environment.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to capture Kalutara. This happened in the 16th Century. At the time the invaders from the Iberian Peninsula had taken over the coastal settlement, Kalutara was a quiet village dominated by the Gangatilaka Vihara, a white dagoba cresting a hill-ock. The Portuguese, however, did not consider the religious significance or the aesthetic qualities of the old temple. Instead, they viewed the site for its military potential, because it commanded the mouth of the Kalu Ganga. Hence, the Gangatilaka Vihara was demolished and a fort built on the strategic site. W.T Keble in his book, "Ceylon Beaten Track", had this to say about the fort: "It was built by Jorge de Alburquerque in 1622 between the two governorships of de Sa".

On 15th October 1655, General Hulft captured Kalutara for the Dutch. The fight for the fort was hard, for the Portuguese put up a stiff resistance. Dr. R.L Brohier in his book, "Links Between Sri Lanka and the Netherlands", referred to the battle for Kalutara as follows:- "There were at the time 225 soldiers to man the Fort, besides, it was filled with Portuguese residents, and

Franciscan ecclesiastics who had rushed in for shelter on the advance of the Dutch. The odds were much against the defending forces, nevertheless, they gallantly held on, keeping the Dutch and the Sinhala at bay, in the hope that relief would come from Colombo". Dr. Brohier continued on to say: - "Historians contend that Kalutara lost Colombo for the Portuguese. Had they adopted the course of abandoning Kalutara and conserving all available man-power to defend Colombo, the gallant defence they subsequently put up at their main fortress may not have been in vain".

A German adventurer named Christopher Schweitzer, who worked for the Dutch East India Company, made perhaps, the first reference to Kalutara in Dutch times. Writing under the date 22nd April 1677, Schweitzer said, "I was sent with 30 soldiers to the Fort of Caltura, 8 leagues from Colombo to have some new ramparts added to it".

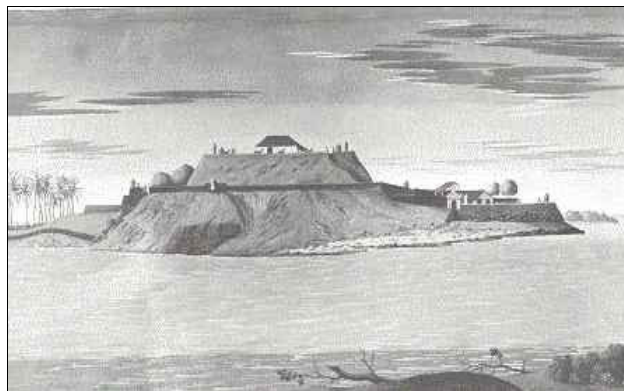
Apparently, the Dutch remodelled and strengthened Kalutara Fort, and the Dutch Governor of The Maritime Provinces of Ceylon, Ryckloff van Goens, had the road from Colombo to Kalutara widened and improved.

The Dutch administration in Ceylon created an efficient canal system, which fell into disrepair through neglect in later centuries. In Dr. R.L Brohier's words, "Few Dutch engineering projects in Ceylon have contributed in a larger measure to the splendid prosperity of the districts they served, than the canal – cuts made by their hydraulic engineers to link up streams, lakes and lagoons".

Governor van Imhoff (1736 – 1740) was responsible for much of the planning of the Dutch canals south of Colombo. Again, in the words of Dr. R L Brohier:" The trace which linked the Bolgoda Lake to the Kalu Ganga and provided communication to Kalutara, is to this day called the Kapu Ela, literally "cut waterway".

The British occupied Kalutara in February 1796. However, shortly after Britain annexed the Kandyan Kingdom from the Sinhalese in 1815, the garrison at Kalutara Fort was withdrawn. With the removal of the troops, Kalutara Fort began its decay. Nevertheless, for a brief period, a Chief Secretary of the British Administration in Colombo, The Honourable John Rodney, used one of the buildings in Kalutara fort as his country residence.

Under the British, the character of Kalutara began to change. British planters began to clear large tracts of land in the surrounding district for the cultivation of rubber. Fur-



The Fort of Kalutara from across Kalu Ganga

thermore, a coach service started from Colombo to Galle, and the residents of Kalutara soon became familiar with the rumble of the coach wheels of Christoffalstz's coaches speeding through the

township. The first part of the southern coastal railway from Colombo ended at Kalutara. The British opened it in 1879.

Ernst Haeckel, in his book, "A Visit To Ceylon 1882," wrote: "At the southernmost end of Caltura a magnificent banyan tree grows across the high road, like a triumphal arch." Sadly, the tree is no longer there today, for it had to give way to road expansion. It is also interesting to note that the

present Botanical Garden at Peradeniya began in Kalutara and shifted to its well-known Kandyan location over a century ago.

From ancient times, Kalutara has been considered the healthiest place in Sri Lanka. Raven -Hart in his book, "Ceylon History In Stone", said this: "Matara is reputedly the most cultured place in Ceylon, as Kalutara is the healthiest: "Born in Kalutara educated in Matara what better?" says a Sinhalese proverb."

Sources:

"Ceylon – History In Stone" - R. Ravenhart
 "A Visit To Ceylon 1882" - Ernst Haeckel
 "Ceylon Beaten Track" - W.T. Keble
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 "Ceylon Of The Early Travellers" - H.A.J. Hulugalle

Founders of a Great Musical Tradition in Sri Lanka

Remembering Major and Mrs W G St Clair

by The Rambler

Musical education in Sri Lanka owes much to two people who were responsible for actively promoting classical music and its learning in the country. The names of Major and Mrs W. G. St Clair may not even evoke a nod of recognition in contemporary Sri Lanka, but in the 1920s and thirties they were names to reckon with.

Major Graeme and Mrs St Clair arrived in Ceylon in 1920. Major St Clair was an organist, and double bass player in Singapore and was responsible for the formation of the Singapore Philharmonic Orchestra in 1891. Mrs St Clair who was a pianist and violinist was a member of the Orchestra as well as a popular music teacher. On Major St Clair's retirement

in 1916, they chose to settle down in Ceylon. Their life in Colombo however was hardly one of retirement. They both engaged themselves enthusiastically in training young people in music. Their home "Silverdawn" in Colpetty was the venue for music classes attended by children from Colombo's leading schools. Mrs. St Clair soon formed an orchestra called the "Mrs W. G. St Clair Student Orchestra" in which many of the young performers were later to become leading musicians and music teachers in Sri Lanka.

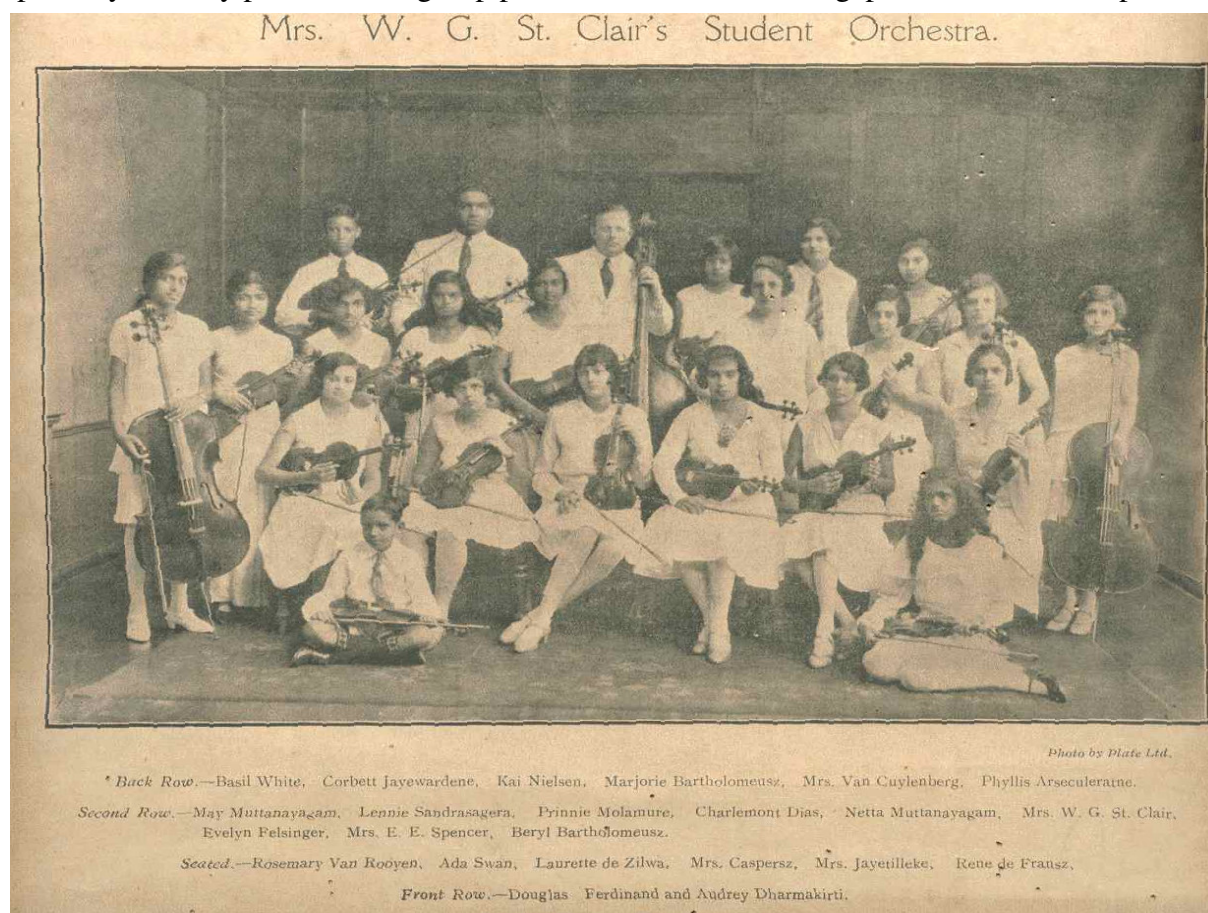
The photograph on page 11 shows the members of the student orchestra after their performance at the Bishops College Hall on 12 March 1930. The orchestral renderings included "Moonlight: Valse" by F.H. Klickmann, Dvorak's "Humoresque", Mendelssohn's "March of the priests", "La Sere-nata" by Toselli, favourites such as "Londonderry Air" and many others. The orchestra was backed by Major St Clair at the double bass.

The photograph shows many young faces who were in later years, to stride the musical scene in Sri Lanka as performers of great skill and talent. Standing at the extreme left at the back row of the group is a young Basil White, later to become a Crown Counsel and a dramatist of no mean skill. Standing next to him is Corbett Jayewardene the younger brother of former President. J.R. Jayewardene. Corbett was to be a man of many parts. He became a lawyer and a judge, a motorcar racing driver, vocalist, and dramatist, and was ordained as a Buddhist monk in his retirement. At the extreme right in the back row is Phyllis Arseculeratne, a well-known pianist and music teacher in later years. Third from left in the second row is Prinnie Molamure who was later to marry Paul Deraniyagala, the paleontologist and Director of the Colombo Museum. Sixth from the left in the second row is Mrs St Clair. Eighth from left is Mrs E. E. Spencer who was also a well-known pianist in later life.

Third from left in the front row is Laurette De Zilwa daughter of Dr Lucian de Zilwa, the

gynaecologist. At the age of 14 she was offered a scholarship to the Royal academy, but her father did not send her as he felt that not having reached the London Matriculation level at that stage, her general education was not broad enough for her to specialize in music. She however gained the Teachers Diploma in Ceylon in piano, violin, and singing, and had many radio broadcasts of her piano recitals and singing. Laurette who is nearing her 90th birthday lives in England and is possibly the only person in the group pres-

Clair died in 1931 in Colombo, unhonoured and literally, unsung. Not so in Singapore, a country he left 15 years previously. On 17 September 1931 the Governor of Singapore Sir Cecil Clementi formally declared open the "St Clair Organ" in the Victoria Memorial Hall to remember "the late Major W.G. St Clair who spent the last years of his life in Ceylon and whose name has been given to this organ in remembrance of his long and unflagging efforts for the advancement of music in Singapore". Mrs St Clair passed



ently alive.

Seated on the ground at left is Douglas Ferdinand who later was a leading violinist and conductor. A household name in musical circles, he was the conductor and director of the Colombo Symphony Orchestra for many years. On the ground on the right is Audrey Dharmakirti who in later life was known as Audrey Dharmakirti Peiris. She was an accomplished violinist and pianist performing at many recitals and concerts in Colombo. And what of their mentors? Major Graeme St

away three years later in 1934. Their magnificent contribution to the cause of musical education in Ceylon may now be forgotten, but surely acknowledged through the glorious musical tradition left through her students, and through them to subsequent generations of Sri Lankans.

(Note by Editor: Readers who may have information on the other members of the group, and their accomplishments, are invited to write in, for a possible future addendum to this article.)

The Colonial 'Kings' of Jaffna

by Vama Vamadevan

The administration of Jaffna during the British period was through the Civil Servants and the *Kachcheri* system. The Administrator himself was the Government Agent (GA) and he played a pivotal role in keeping the wheels of governance in this far-flung province oiled and working. Over time, many of them became benevolent dictators. While serving the Colonial masters they also won the hearts and minds of the people.

One such administrator was PERCIVAL ACKLAND DYKE, also referred to as the RAJAH OF JAFFNA. He served more than 40 years as GA of the Northern Province (NP), and left an indelible mark on the people of Jaffna, at that time. He was feared and at the same time respected. He astounded the people by his insistence on discipline, fair play and justice. He was feared, but at the same time considered a friend, and the people found in him an outstanding defender of all their interests. He had an intimate knowledge of the wants and aspirations of the people of Jaffna, and served them without condescension or false pretensions. He ruthlessly pursued the strict law of duty.

He showed hauteur and brusqueness but his egalitarian views backed by action won him a niche in everyone's heart. If things did not go his way, he would show it in no unmistakable terms. On one occasion he refused an in-

crease of pay given to him by the Governor and on another occasion he refused to receive the visiting Governor as his guest. He was unbending to a fault and was passionate about everything he did for Jaffna, verging on being obstinate.

His forte was the interests and well being of the people of Jaffna. He was so devoted to this task that he stimulated others too to excel in similar vein. He carried this obsession to extremes and that is how he earned the epitaph of King of Jaffna.

Dyke was born in 1805 and started life as a mid-shipman in the Royal Navy. Later, he joined the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS) in May 1922 at the age of 17. He came out to Ceylon with Sir Edward Barnes. He was posted as Assistant collector of Jaffna in 1825. He got postings in Trincomalee and Colombo, but gave them up each time on his own request and returned to the Jaffna Kachcheri, and worked there until his death. It was thought at the time that

his constant refusal to serve anywhere, other than Jaffna, cost him not only high office in the colonial administration in Colombo, but even honours back home in England.

He went only on one occasion on home leave to UK for 18 months, but returned to Jaffna within 8 months. The story goes that one-day he got off the train in Victoria and took a London Cab. The Cabman was rude to him and he was so badly infuriated that he cut short his holiday and returned to Jaffna by the next available ves-

sel and never left Jaffna again. Dyke's love of Jaffna was legendary. In his 40 years service in Jaffna he went to England



Percival Dyke—Rajah of Jaffna

on home leave only once. He continued to work in Jaffna until his death.

Immediately after Dyke, his protégé TWYNAM followed as GA Jaffna. Twynam too started life as a mid-shipman in the Royal Navy. His boat put into shore at Trincomalee and he was sent ashore to buy provisions and victuals. Young and hot-headed he and his men ended up in a brawl with some locals and he had to seek refuge in a Hindu Temple where a hostile crowd besieged them. The rest of the ship crew got wind of his predicament and reinforcements were rushed to the scene. Twynam and his men were rescued. Twynam was then taken to Colombo, where he was court-marshalled and summarily dismissed from the Royal Navy. He ended up stranded in Colombo.

It was about this time that P.A.Dyke who was GA, NP the 'Rajah of Jaffna' because of his benevolent and despotic hold on the Province happened to be visiting Colombo. Twynam's mother had helped young Dyke when he himself had problems in the Navy and Dyke saw this as his chance to do a good turn to her. He took pity on Twynam and brought him with him to Jaffna. He took him into the Civil Service and posted him in the Kachcheri as his Assistant. When Dyke retired after 40 years service in Jaffna, he was succeeded by Twynam who himself served in that position for 40 years. Between Dyke and Twynam they were in-charge of Jaffna for a full 80 years. Needless to say they left an indelible mark on the colonial administration of Jaffna. It is therefore easy to comprehend the impact these two officials had on Jaffna for close upon a century.

When Dyke retired Twynam was the obvious choice to succeed him. He carried on the good work done by Dyke with the same spirit, zeal and love of Jaffna. Like Dyke, he was a frequent visitor to the St.

John's Church in Chundikuli every Sunday and had a special love for the College. He not only served Jaffna for 40 years but he spent the rest of his life in Jaffna until his death. To the local Burgher population of Jaffna he was a sort of patriarch and entertained them lavishly at Christmas and New Year celebrations. Even in his retirement, his wise counsel was sort by both the public of Jaffna and succeeding public Officers. He had a paternalistic love of Jaffna, St. John's and its people.

The Twynam Museum was opened in his honour, and until the 1940s had valuable exhibits and artifacts from the Peninsula. R.H.Bassett in his book *Romantic Ceylon* (1929) says Sir William Twynam was a privileged character and a good conversationalist, very intelligent and a storehouse of experience and knowledge. One of his characteristics was to punctuate all his sentences with the word 'otherwise' with surprising frequency both appropriately and inappropriately. If Dyke was the 'Rajah of Jaffna', Twynam was the second Rajah. His memory will live long. He died at the ripe old age of 96 in his beloved Jaffna. The Museum in St. John's was a memorial to the man and his life of service. It became the repository of all his memorabilia that he collected of every conceivable object of interest in the Peninsula. It included implements used by different castes in their hereditary industries. A Portrait of Sir William Twynam adorns the residency in Jaffna. In later years the contents of the Twynam Museum were moved to the Jaffna Museum.

In the same tradition is the legendary figure, Lieutenant Nolan who lived in Delft in the early 19th century. Delft is a 6 X 3 miles island in the south west of the Jaffna peninsula. It is flat with thick growth of Palmyra. The southern parts of this island are open plains covered with luscious grass. The Dutch introduced the Arab Horses, importing them and breeding them

on this island. With the free ranch facility the breeding was good and this continued until the British times. By 1906 the breeding of horses was abandoned. Left to themselves the breeding deteriorated and now only ponies roam freely in Delft. The crumbling ruins of stables extending over a mile, standing among coral stones, is a testimony to the grand scale on which it was thriving at an earlier stage,

It was on this desolate island that Nolan lived in the Dutch residency and behaved like an Eastern Potentate. He had all the trappings of a Rajah including a harem. His word was law and he was a benevolent tyrant. Through his concubines he left a generation of grey-eyed islanders.

Jaffna had these Colonial administrators who loved the place, and the people in turn treated them as Rajahs. Even in postcolonial times, Jaffna was fortunate to have the likes of Vernon Abeyasekera and Wimal Amarasekera as GAs who threw themselves into the spirit of the place and won the hearts and minds of the people.

David Paynter OBE

An artist Sri Lanka can be proud of

by Paddy Mitchell

David Shillingford Paynter was the son of missionary parents – Rev Arthur Paynter, an Englishman and his low country Sinhalese wife - Anagi Weerasooriya. Born on the 5th March 1900, the third child in a family of four, he spent his early childhood travelling with them in India.

From an early age he was exposed to all forms of the arts, such as reading, classical music and painting. He soon showed prowess in painting and his father realised all he ever wanted to do was paint. After spending his early school days at Brecks Memorial

School, Ooty, South India, he and his brother Arnold came to Trinity College Kandy for their secondary education while his parents settled in Nuwara Eliya.

David was the first Sri Lankan to have a modern art education in England and Italy. He had won a five- year scholarship in the Royal Academy Schools, and later won the Royal Academy Gold medal and the Edward Statts Travelling Scholarship, which took him to Italy.

Rev John McLeod Campbell, the Principal of Trinity College offered him a job teaching art and boxing, which he was also adept at. During the holidays he would travel everywhere, painting wild life, village life, the beaches, and every other aspect from Ceylon's immense canvas of natural beauty.



David Paynter
1900-1975

Through the years David had his pictures hung in the Royal Academy from 1923 and every year thereafter until the 2nd World War. In addition to this his pictures were exhibited in galleries world wide, including Carnegie Institute USA and the World Fair, New York. For his offering at an International Exhibition in New Delhi he won the first award, and he

even had a one- man Show at the Wertheim Gallery, London in the thirties.

When asked to do the murals on rock at the Trinity College Chapel, David spent some time practising this special art. These murals gradually came to life in 1929. He had used Trinity College teachers and school-boys and the occasional arresting head or figure on the streets as his models, and Eva his sister posed as the mother of Zebedee's sons. The final result of this work were the outstanding murals 'Are ye Able' in the Meditation Chapel, 'The Crucifixion', the

'Good Samaritan' and the 'Washing of the Disciple's Feet'. The originals of the last two had been left open to the elements and deteriorated so much, that by 1965, the Principal asked David to re-do them. The rock was chipped back and he did entirely new concepts of these two murals.

He earned a reputation as an excellent portrait painter, and was even commissioned by Pandit Nehru, who he is reported to have said, was a most restless subject!

David Paynter was decorated with the OBE in 1951. In the same year he also accepted the appointment of Principal of the newly opened Government College of Fine Arts. This gave him the opportunity to pass on to many young artists the benefit of his vast experience and talent.

In 1968 he was commissioned to paint 'The Transfiguration' – an enormous mural in the chapel of St Thomas College, Mt Lavinia. This is considered by many to be his best work.

The Paynter homes in Nuwara Eliya also ran farms in the foothills of the Himalayas and later near Trincomalee to support and give work to the youngsters who had outgrown the Homes in Nuwara Eliya. These projects were very close to David's heart, and he worked and lived with these boys, finally making the projects his whole occupation. He died suddenly of a heart attack in 1975.

Sources:

(1) *David Paynter - By Eva Darling and Albert Dharmasiri – Head of the Department, Dept. of Art and Sculpture, Institute of Aesthetic Studies, University of Kelaniya. Printed in 1982 by M.D. Gunasena.*

(2) *Paynter – Eva Darling and Albert Dharmasiri (companion volume- both limited editions. 1987) both books published in aid of the Nuwara Eliya Childrens' Homes.*

Genealogy Corner

My father was born in 1927 and I believe that his birth place is Sri Lanka. His name was John Clarke Sydney BOIS. I do not know his parents full names but believe that his mother was a Raymond from the 'Raymond Funeral Services' in Colombo. My father married Gertrude Anne Sibert in Malaysia in the 60s. I was born in 1974. (that's me in the stroller) My full name is Genevieve Christeta Bois. I do not have much info on my father except that he was working in Hong Kong at the time of my birth. I was born in Malaysia. My father was a reporter. His last postings were with the New Straits Times and the Star newspapers in Malaysia. I would appreciate any help that you can give me. I have three children now and would like to tell them about their ancestry. I can be contacted via cgaasm@hotmail.com



I am searching for any record of my great grandmother in Sri Lanka. Her name was Edith Haslett. She was born maybe in 1869 in India, a sister to Jim Corbett of tiger hunting fame. She married a William Gilbert Fortescue in 1899 in Naini Tal and had two children. Her husband died in 1904 and several months later Edith was found starving in a railway station in India. The children were taken from her and placed in Dr Grahams Homes in Kalimpong. The last letter from Edith is dated 1905 so I know she was alive then. In papers I have from Dr Grahams, there is reference to Edith's death being noted in newspapers - apparently she took her own life in a hotel in Colombo, Sri Lanka. However her sister Maggie Corbett says in 1920 that Edith is still alive and living in a nursing home in Ceylon. Family rumour talks of a priest from the Naini Tal area who used to hunt with Jim, going to Sri Lanka and setting up a home/nursing facility to care for women who had fallen on tough times. Any information on my great grandmother would be wonderful.

I look forward to hearing from you

Jill Gordon -Canterbury-New Zealand
jill.gordon@ccc.govt.nz

Appreciation

Noel Crusz 1921 - 2003

Noel Francis Crusz – The Priest Journalist, Teacher, Film Producer, Radio Maestro, Drama Director, Photographer, Historian and Puppeteer passed away peacefully on 17th December 2003, after a brief illness.

Born in Sri Lanka, Noel my long-time friend, guide and inspirer was ordained a Priest of the Catholic Church on the Feast Day of St. Joseph 19th March 1943 at St. Lucia's Cathedral Kotehena. The Souvenir of his Sacerdotal Ordination carried a quote “I am what I am by the Grace of God – a Priest for ever “ It lasted only 18 years when he was granted special dispensation to marry in the Church the beautiful woman Marie Tirzah many years younger than him, one who cared and inspired him and was always at his side in all his endeavours She was a tower of strength to him for 46 years

An Old Boy of St. Peter's College he served on their Tutorial Staff and also at St. Joseph's College. He was called the 'Bing Crosby - Hollywood Padre'. It was way back then I first met him, as a 15-year-old student of St. Joseph's. I had from then onwards got involved in so many of his projects through many years.

At St. Joseph's he was the Master in Charge of the Film Society and the Music Art & Drama Society. He directed a film “Little Bike Lost” a 16mm send up of De Sica's “Bicycle Thieves”. It was shown to London audiences and the “British Amateur Cine World” called him, “ Crusader with a Camera”. In Colombo, The Premiere of the film & award presentation was attended by the then Prime Minister The Hon. S.W.R.D Bandaranaike & Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike.

Noel held a BA from the University of London, MA from the University of NSW and a Di-

ploma of Education from Armidale NSW and Fordham University USA. He was trained at the BBC London and broadcast on London's Home Service Programs and from Radio Eireann, Hilversum, Cologne and Berne. He was a newsreader for Vatican Radio and had broadcast on the Voice of America. In Sri Lanka he was a Director of Radio Ceylon, Catholic Hour Programme, produced Radio Features, Plays, Interviews and was Script Writer for the Government Film Unit's Weekly Film News Reels. As a free lance Journalist Noel contributed to the major Australian and International Press. “ The Cocos Islands Mutiny “ was his first book.

I had the privilege of proposing the toast at his 75th birthday party organised by his erstwhile friends Lalin & Carmen Fernando. I remember well the speech of the man who gave Noel a flying start when he migrated to Australia in 1974. He was Bro. Bernard Bulfin, Principal of the Patri- cian Brother College who in spite of the Catholic Church banning ex - priests from teaching in Catholic Schools gave



him his first teaching post at the College in Blacktown NSW. Bro. Bernard referred to him as a “Wonderfully dedicated teacher for 17 years, a model and guide to staff and the thousands of Australian Youth” Another speaker Allen Giles who sponsored Noel & Tirzah to Australia said “ Their story is a success story of what migrants have contributed to this Country”.

A devout Catholic up to the time of his death, he will be truly missed by the Sri Lankan community especially the Old Peterites and Old Josephians in Sydney / Melbourne. He leaves behind his loving wife Tirzah, sisters Noeline & Yvonne, brothers Rienzie Maxwell and Jerome. Two brothers, Prof. Hilary and Vernon pre deceased him. May he Rest in Peace.

Harry de Sayrah J P

BOOK REVIEWS



Count de Mauny: Myth and Reality

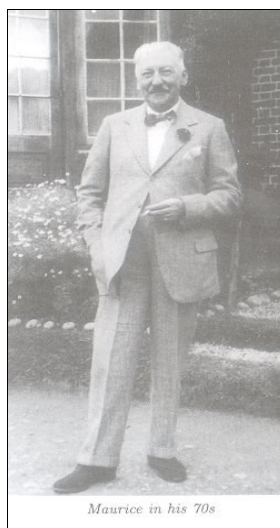
- a review of "Count de Mauny, Friend of Royalty" by Seweryn Chomet (Begell House Inc., New York, 2002; 125 pages)

Few foreigners transplanted by Fate to Sri Lanka's shores during the past century have managed to surround themselves with such mystique as the Frenchman and naturalized Briton known as the Count de Mauny (1866-1941). Plenty of Lankans and visitors to the Island know of his name and the exotic home he created over seventy years ago on the tiny islet in Weligama Bay, between Galle and Matara, that he christened "Taprobane". Writers as diverse as Paul Bowles, Robin Maugham, Shaun Mandy and Norah Burke have all written vividly about the place, as indeed did the Count himself, but since his death in 1941 surprisingly little light has ever been shed on the man himself. Now Seweryn Chomet, a Physicist and Visiting Research Fellow at King's College, London, has come along to provide readers with some fascinating insights into the sometimes-bizarre reality behind the romantic myth of the man who styled himself Maurice de Mauny Talvande, Count de Mauny.

One of several myths about himself assiduously created by Maurice - and now demolished by Seweryn Chomet - is that he was a high-born French Count. Nothing could have been further from the truth! In reality, Maurice was born plain Maurice Talvande, son of Felix Talvande, a solidly middle-class bank official based at the time (1866) in the provincial town of Le Mans, France. Maurice's mother was Marguerite Adelaide Louise, née Froger de Mauny. Interestingly Maurice's brother Roger never "borrowed" the de Mauny

matronymic, being known throughout his life as Roger Talvande. Chomet mentions that historically the real "Count de Mauny" title appears to have been bestowed by the Emperor Napoleon on a French politician named Clement de Ris, who had no known connection with Marguerite's family.

A major fascination of Chomet's short but quite detailed biography lies in his carefully-researched investigation of Maurice de Mauny Talvande's life in Europe before re-inventing himself in Ceylon in the thirty-odd years of his life after 1912.



Maurice in his 70s

What little Maurice ever wrote about his earlier years seems to have been deliberately romanticised and heavily "edited" in his favour.

For example, Chomet forensically examines what very probably was a decidedly sordid state of affairs surrounding the so-called "university" that Maurice

briefly established for young teenage boys from "good" English families at a rented château at Azay-le-Rideau on the Loire River, shortly before his June 1898 marriage to Lady Mary Byng, daughter of the 4th Earl of Strafford. A June 1899 letter written in French to Maurice by Princess Helena, third daughter of Queen Victoria, and a close friend of Lady Mary, which is quoted in full, early on in the book, cautiously hints at dark rumours ("inventions" - perhaps?) circulating about its recipient. Another letter from the royal Princess to Maurice later that same summer, mentions "cruel tales" and "heavy clouds" and suggests Maurice take advice from a leading English (divorce) lawyer, Sir Francis Jeune. A leading New York newspaper had published a scathing article

late in 1898 criticizing Azay-le-Rideau for being “not a university, but a mere boarding house” where the main subjects taught were “cricket, polo and football”. Anglophobic locals increasingly resented the “English take-over” of the historic castle.

Infinitely more damaging and dangerous than these attacks, reveals Chomet, were the persistent rumours (the subject of Princess Helena’s cryptic letters?) of sexual advances made by Maurice to some of the aristocratic adolescents entrusted into his care. By various accounts the ambience at Azay-le-Rideau appears to have been decidedly homoerotic. One of Queen Victoria’s less salubrious sons-in-law, the notoriously aberrant Lord Lorne, rumoured to be (at the very least) sexually ambivalent, mysteriously visited the château in August 1898. The 19-year-old Bend’Or, future Duke of Westminster, who briefly attended the “university” that same summer, later revealed to his mother that before leaving Azay precipitately he had confronted “Count de Mauny” about reports of his homosexuality, and that the “Count” had “owned up that it is so”. By late 1898 the château’s absentee owner, alarmed by mounting local dissent and these dark rumours of (then) criminal activities, had abruptly cancelled the lease, and the de Maunys had moved on – first to Cannes (where their first child, Victor Alexander, was born in the Spring of 1899), then San Remo, and finally England.

A persistent trait throughout Maurice’s life was his uncanny ability to cultivate the friendship of the rich and famous, and to bask in their reflected glory – undoubtedly due largely to his genuine charm, intelligence and natural style. The visitors’ book at “Taprobane” – sadly lost, as Chomet regretfully tells us – would surely reveal many fascinating names. Maurice even receives a passing mention in Queen Victoria’s Journal, when she refers to a “French man M. de Mauny Talvande” (note: *not*

“Count”!) being engaged to Lady Mary (“Tooka”) Byng, daughter of one of her royal equerries. Lady Mary was thirty-three at the time of the glamorous “high society” wedding in London, followed by a glittering reception at the bride’s family’s 18th century mansion, Wrotham Park, in Hertfordshire, attended by the Princess of Wales. Chomet suggests that Maurice may have met Lady Mary through his friendship with her brother, George Byng, with whom Maurice briefly attended the same fashionable Jesuit-run school in Canterbury in the early 1880s.

At any rate the “de Mauny Talvande” marriage appears not to have been a success, even before Maurice decamped permanently to Ceylon soon after the Great War – whether because of Maurice’s possibly conflicted sexuality or for other reasons such as his constant extravagance (or a combination of such) remains a mystery. Quite possibly, suggests Chomet, Lady Mary continued to subsidize her absent husband for the rest of his life, as well as maintaining for many years on her own, the family’s substantial rented home in England, for she eventually died in relative poverty. Perhaps the respectable Byng family even “paid” Maurice to stay away, like many a “remittance man” in the distant colonies of those times? Maurice’s nephew revealed to Seweryn Chomet in 2001 that it was well known in his family that “Uncle Maurice” was habitually in financial difficulties. If so, Maurice came by it honestly, as the saying goes – shortly before his parents separated in 1890, his father Felix Talvande declared bankruptcy after his eponymous bank collapsed. Felix even spent some time in prison for financial irregularities, and was conspicuously absent from his son’s wedding in 1898.

Some years later, in 1909-10, Maurice himself went bankrupt. Seweryn Chomet provides details of the failed newspaper venture that brought him down, and inci-

dentally reveals a tendency on the part of Maurice to ignore the fine print and plunge into business ventures with sometimes-reckless abandon. At the bankruptcy hearing he declared that he had no assets of his own, and had relied mainly on regular remittances from his mother until 1902, when some failed investments forced her to curtail these. It would seem that this financial catastrophe, together with his marital problems that included a year-long separation from his wife in around 1907, the same year that his terrifyingly formidable mother died in France, led Maurice to visit Ceylon for the first time in about 1912, possibly as the guest of none other than Sir Thomas Lipton, the tea magnate. Of course, Maurice had a more romantic explanation for being attracted to Ceylon – his admiration for the rhizome *Gloriosa Superba* spotted in a friend's Bourne-mouth greenhouse, which he claimed had been dug up on the Island.

Further lengthy visits appear to have occurred periodically during and after the Great War, and by 1920-1 "Ferguson's Ceylon Directory" has Maurice listed as residing with his twenty-one-year-old son Victor Alexander in Colombo at "Ascot", Albert Crescent, Cinnamon Gardens. (Victor later became a decorated Royal Navy Commander in World War Two, and retired in the 1970s as Chairman of the Rosehough Tea Company. He died childless in 1978 and his sister Alexandra likewise died childless in 1989, in England. Chomet mentions an intriguing but alas! unprovable rumour that Victor had an illegitimate son in Ceylon who eventually emigrated to New Zealand).

The book also provides some interesting background to Lady Mary Byng, Maurice's long-suffering wife, who never visited Ceylon. Her father became Earl Strathford when his older brother, the 3rd Earl, died in 1898, the same year that Maurice married Mary. (An interesting side note,

not of course mentioned in the book, is that the Byng family of Wrotham Park shared common ancestry with the 7th Viscount Torrington (1812-1884), previously known as Sir George Byng, whose hapless governorship of Ceylon in the later 1840s coincided with the colonial secretaryship of Sir James Emerson Tennent. Lady Mary's paternal ancestry derived from a younger son of George Byng (died 1733), the 1st Viscount Torrington, who had fifteen children in all). Lady Mary's immediate family was haunted by tragedy, for all its social eminence. As Seweryn Chomet tells us, both her Byng brothers died tragically young in the early 1890s, and her father - the 4th Earl - would later die in mysterious circumstances after inexplicably wandering on to the line and being decapitated by a passing railway train at Potter's Bar Station, London. Despite such tragedy, marriage into the Byng family

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gave Maurice the social credibility that he craved, and helps to explain why he got away so well with awarding himself an aristocratic title to which he had absolutely no right.

Maurice's activities in Ceylon during the last two decades of his life are covered only briefly in the book, and Chomet's account here will hold few real surprises for many readers with knowledge of Sri Lanka. Still, it is

interesting to read that the future "Taprobane Island" was bought by Maurice in the mid-1920s for a mere Rs. 250, and the purchase registered not in his own name, but in that of his son Victor. One wonders if Maurice was still avoiding creditors back home! Victor sold the little island with the octagonal house built by his father for Rs. 12,000 in 1942, by which time his place of residence appears as Hampshire, England. Maurice's long service during the 1930s as a Weligama Urban Council member is briefly mentioned in the book, and it would be interesting if some future researcher could cast more light on this aspect of his career in Ceylon. Of course, his writings (*The Gardens of Taprobane*, etc.) receive due mention, also his prolific work as a landscape and gardening designer for many prominent homes in Colombo. The author pays due respect to Maurice's undoubted skills as a craftsman and furniture designer, but points out that today much of what he produced comes across as well-manufactured "knock-offs" of contemporary French designs rather than truly original pieces. Whether Maurice truly employed "more than 200" craftsmen, as he later claimed,

in his "Weligama Local Industries" before the Great Depression shut it down for a number of years in the early 1930s, is now impossible to say.



"Taprobane Island" was bought by Maurice in mid 1920 s for a mere Rs 250

During a visit to Sri Lanka last year (2002), I came across a reference to "Count de Mauny" in an as-yet-unpublished family memoir. The late writer, a prominent Ceylon civil servant during the 1930s and 1940s, mentions encountering the 73-year-old Mau-

rice in his bathing shorts at Weligama early in 1940, and recalls having "fallen out" with him on an earlier occasion. The memoirist had refused permission to the local Government Headman to decorate the Weligama beach with lighted coconut shells and to hold a procession of dancers and fireworks, *all at government expense*, to entertain Governor Caldecott on a *private* visit to "Taprobane". If Count de Mauny had himself offered to pay the villagers to put on such a display, comments the memoirist, there could have been no objection, but instead he had expected the local taxpayers (in effect) to cover the cost of what was strictly a private visit. This little anecdote certainly ties in with certain less attractive characteristics of Maurice that come across in Seweryn Chomet's biography – the fondness for grandiose entertainment that emerged early on in his marriage and helped to drive him into a financial quagmire, the desire to mix with "top people", and a certain conscience-free readiness to take advantage of the financial resources of others, whether morally appropriate or not.

Maurice died suddenly from a heart attack

during a visit to the Chelvarayan Estate, Navatkuli on November 27, 1941, and was buried at St. Mary's Burial Ground in Jaffna, far away from his beloved "Taprobane". His estranged wife back in England, the unfortunate Lady Mary, died in 1947. For all his many flaws, however, as his biographer points out towards the end of his book, the small-town boy Maurice - with his lack of real credentials, not even a wholly genuine name, to enter British high society as successfully as he did - could not have sustained his assumed role without being a genuinely entertaining, interesting and (above all) believable character. All in all, Mr. Chomet has done *aficionados* of Sri Lanka a great service in bringing out this highly readable book that for the first time uncovers at least some of the reality behind the mythology surrounding Maurice Talvande, self-styled "Count de Mauny".

Joe Simpson
(Duncan, B.C., Canada - October 17, 2003).

[Note: this reviewer acquired his copy of "Count de Mauny, Friend of Royalty" for approximately Pds. Stlg. 10 (Cdn \$25) at **John Sandoe Books Ltd.**, 10 Blacklands Terrace, London SW3 2SR, England, U.K. (www.johnsandoe.com). The book's author, Seweryn Chomet (pronounced "Homet" to rhyme with "comet"), has a website listing his various publications at <http://mysite.freeseerve.com/ShadrachHouse>. Internet orders of this book can also be arranged through email address textor@btinternet.com].

Did you know??

A snail can sleep for three years (wow wish I had the opportunity)

Crocodiles never outgrow the pool in which they live? (thank heaven, I put mine in a goldfish bowl)

February 1865 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon (gosh, where did it go?)

GOOD COMPANY

S. Pathiravitana, *Through My Asian Eyes*. Godage International Publishers (Pvt) Ltd., 2003; paperback, xii + 400 pp. Available soon to members \$15.00 + P&H, contact the Treasurer.

Reviewed by Emeritus Professor Yasmine Gooneratne

There is, as the author of this selection from fifty years of newspaper articles and reviews declares in his brief Introduction,

a kind of newspaper writing which seems sometimes to transcend the transient. Some readers do put away such writings for a more leisurely rumination, whenever the time and day is available.

'The time and day' became available to me this year, and I am very glad, not only that they did, but also that this collection of thoughtful and witty essays has presented itself in a form which allows the reader to survey a half-century of Sri Lanka's post-Independence experiences through such observant eyes as those of Mr S. Pathiravitana, former journalist and newspaper editor.

In addition to 35 essays which first appeared as articles and book reviews in the *Ceylon Daily News*, the *Sunday Observer* and *The Island*, this book presents 160 pages of cameos from columns which Mr Pathiravitana wrote with a lighter touch under the pseudonyms of 'Autolycus', 'Stylus', and 'Ariel'. A substantial collection, in fact, and one which, due to the roughly chronological arrangement of the chosen pieces, permits us to view a series of events as they appeared at the time. An important feature of the book is the tone in which those events (and the writer's

thoughts about them) are presented for the reader's consideration and 'rumination'. His easy, conversational manner recalls what Jane Austen famously defined as 'the best company' in *Persuasion*:

"My idea of good company, Mr Elliot, is the company of clever, well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is what I call good company."

"You are mistaken," said he gently, "that is not good company, that is the best."

A quiet, ironic humour surfaces pleasantly everywhere in Mr Pathiravitana's writing, conveying in essay after essay an impression that one is in the cheerful presence of a wise and knowledgeable individual to whom one has just been introduced. That impression is important because it reinforces the book's point and purpose: which is to encourage, in the author's own words, 'the putting away of colonial mental chains' which still survive as habits of thought among Sri Lankans fifty years after the departure of the British.

It is no accident that the earliest published essays in the collection pay tribute to certain authors who strove in their time, through the written and spoken word, to awaken in the increasingly alienated Ceylonese, a better understanding of the spiritual worth and values of their own inherited culture: among these authors are Ananda Coomaraswamy, Paul E. Peiris and Ponnambalam Arunachalam. In the pieces he has selected for this book, Mr Pathiravitana emulates his mentors in this regard, bringing an Asian sensibility to bear on the changing world around him without the least attempt to lecture, browbeat, or condescend to his reader. Here is what he has to say on that most international of subjects, the Nobel Prize:

Not many may be aware that there is

something called the Alternative Nobel Prize. It has been in existence for some time now and awards prizes annually for achievements in what I would like to call sane living.

The better publicized Nobel prize award has a tendency to add more to the chaos of our lives by encouraging high-tech advances rather than its intended purposes to promote harmony ...

This year's Alternative Nobel prize goes to two land reform organizations in Brazil, some ecological British activists and the victims of nuclear testing in the Pacific. This one million Swedish kroner award begun by a Swedish-German writer, Jakob von Uexkull, is worth a modest \$165,000.

He raised the fund by selling his valuable collection of stamps. In future, don't call it the Alternative Nobel Prize. It has a name of its own and one with meaning. The donor named it Right Living. It's a phrase von Uexkull chose from among the eight noble paths the Buddha named. Right living is *samma aajivo*, something [Sri Lanka], a Buddhist country, has lost sight of.

The impact of these essays is cumulative. Their persuasive effect is enhanced by the variety of the author's subjects (both local and international) and by his easy, addictive style - one finds oneself finishing an essay and going on immediately to the next because of the possibility that the next will prove to be even more enjoyable than its predecessor. This is not an easy task for writers to accomplish, especially writers of non-fiction who cannot rely on mystery and suspense to keep their readers 'hooked'.

The choice of 'Autolycus' as a pseudonym is an interesting one, for although it is plain that Mr Pathiravitana brought to his

journalistic task over many years an unusually wide-ranging acquaintance with English and Sinhala literature both classical and contemporary, the illustrations he has snapped up for the thoughtful points he makes are by no means unconsidered trifles: on the contrary, although a poem by Robert Herrick or William Butler Yeats, a story from the *Panchatantra* or the *Jataka* story cycle, or a satirical parody from the pen of his colleague E.M.W. Joseph (writing as Chevalier Sooty Banda, Lord Protector of Menikes) seem to come from him with equal ease, they are always aptly chosen and never fail in their aim, whether that aim is to amuse or to enlighten.

Essay No. 24 ('The Pukka Sahibs') is devoted to a commentary on *Growing*, Volume 2 of the autobiography of Leonard Woolf, the British civil servant who wrote Sri Lanka's first major English-language novel, *The Village in the Jungle*. It is obvious that Mr Pathiravitana admires Woolf, and especially admires Woolf's forthright and honest assessment of his own role as a colonial administrator. It may not be generally known, however, not even, perhaps, to admirers such as Mr Pathiravitana, that Woolf also compiled an anthology. Titled *A Calendar of Consolation*, and sub-titled "A Comforting Thought for Every Day in the Year", his collection was published in 1967, two years before his death in 1969. Ever since I learned of its existence, the idea of it fascinated me: I am interested in every aspect of Woolf's experiences in Sri Lanka, and I was especially intrigued by what an anthology so titled might reveal of the state of Woolf's mind towards the end of his life. Were there particular days of the year, perhaps, which brought him melancholy memories, anniversaries that required consolation and comfort? I searched vainly in libraries and bookshops for Woolf's *Calendar*, without results until, having chanced upon a lone copy advertised this year by a British second-hand

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.

Armageddon or Brave New World?
By Christie Weeramantry. Published by Sarvodaya Visva Lekha, 173pp, AU\$ 12.50 + \$ 2.50 f&h. Contact Jay Fernando 03 9841 0192.

Without Fear or Favour by F. N. D. (Freddy) Jilla. Memoirs of a retired officer of the Sri Lanka Police Service. Published by Vishva Lekha 2001, 625pp \$25.00 + \$4.00 p&h. Call Homi Jilla (03) 9804 5316

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

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 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

Please note p&h is within Australia only, overseas postage quoted on request.

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bookseller on the net, I became its owner by the swift use of email and a credit card.

Leonard Woolf, who is remembered in Britain today chiefly for the political essays he published in British journals such as the *New Statesman* (and, of course, for having been the husband of Virginia Woolf), devoted his writing skills and his considerable intellectual energy to a life-long attempt to influence his countrymen in the direction of humanity, decency and good sense. The choice and arrangement of the 365 short extracts of prose and verse in his *Calendar of Consolation* reveal a good deal about his outlook on life. How pleasant, then, to meet Mr Pathiravitana! For like Woolf's *Calendar*, the essays and reviews reprinted in *Through My Asian Eyes* support my conviction that one can depend on 'clever, well-informed people' for good conversation, as one can look to them for good anthologies. From his performance as an anthologist, the reader can expect the best possible company.

Emeritus Professor Yasmine Gooneratne's scholarly edition of Leonard Woolf's novel The Village in the Jungle, the first to draw on the author's original manuscript, is scheduled for publication in 2004. Her most recent book, Masterpiece and Other Stories, is available from Silicon Crafts Pty Ltd., Sydney. Tel: (02) 9899 2000.

Candappa, E C T, The Palm of His Hand a novel published by Indialog Publications, New Delhi.

Reviewed by Douglas Jones

It was the best of times; it might be said, for millions of people in the Ceylon of 1956. A general election had ended and S W R D Bandaranaike and his Sri Lanka

Freedom Party in a Coalition with the Communist, Marxist and Trotskyist political parties and with strong and vociferous support of the Buddhist clergy was swept into power. The ruling UNP under Dudley Senanayake that stood for the capitalist and so-called *thuppai* culture was resoundingly defeated.

SWRD had roused the nationalist sentiment in the people with a portfolio of turning around a Western-orientated direction the country had taken prior to and since Independence in 1948. The drill was to steer a course of true independence both domestically and in its relations with the rest of the world.

The country was agog with his promises, among other things, of liberation for the people from the rural areas (the common man) who were unrecognised through their lack of English education that precluded interaction with the administration and access to employment. Of consolidating proper recognition in the seat of Government for indigenous medicine extensively and effectively practiced in the remote villages. Of Buddhism, the religion

A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



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Anton & Varini Massilamany
Eastwood NSW

...who have joined since publication of
Journal 24

of the Sinhalese majority, being elevated to a position befitting a State-religion, and of Sinhala (with 'Reasonable Use of Tamil') that had played the role of a mere second fiddle, being raised to the pinnacle of the island's national language.

It soon was also the worst of times for as many millions or more of the people. The Buddhist precept of treading the middle path appealed to the liberal minded Prime Minister, but this policy was fraught with discontent, and there was a cacophony of conflicting demands on all sides. After three brief years of governance, while SWRD's fame spread internationally, on the domestic front however, in the eyes of the people these policies spelt dismay and disenchantment. It was a case of blighted hope in the very people who gave Bandaranaike unstinted support into power, who were now equally determined to put an end to his reign. Teachers, the Sangha, Ayurvedic practitioners, were demanding rights and privileges, promised but not forthcoming. Civil unrest and racial riots (often instigated by the militant elements in the government (even Cabinet) was the outcome. To them, Bandaranaike was indecisive, spineless and courting political expediency.

Not wanting to dilly-dally any longer, a group of disgruntled monks and lay persons who found their own agendas thwarted by a Prime Minister trying to please all the people all the time, with criminals and unscrupulous police personnel as cohorts, had Bandaranaike gunned down in his own home in Rosmead Place on the eve of his departure to New York to address the UN General Assembly.

At this very time in the history of Sri Lankan politics, E.C.T. Candappa was Parliamentary Correspondent for the leading national daily *The Daily News*. He was in the middle of the unfolding political drama and watched with an objective eye

and an incisive mind not only the blasé happenings on the floor of Parliament, but also the illicit liaisons, Machiavellian plots, palace intrigues and all the shenanigans that would have made William Shakespeare want to die for.

The acutely observant reporter, with an innate sense of fairness and dedication to portray the truth as he saw it, has now put all those experiences into his first novel *The Palm of His Hand*.

This is the first fictionalised version of the Bandaranaike assassination. It traces with clinical detail and feeling the events that led to the shooting itself and the tragic aftermath.

Anyone reading this book will see SWRD in a light very different to what was commonly perceived at the time. He wasn't quite the heartless, power-hungry politician clutching on to leadership for its own sake and playing parlour games with this power group and that. He comes up as a benign, humane leader who also craved for the simple pleasures of life with a growing family, a pleasure he could not enjoy for the vagaries of political calling. This is an authentic view confirmed, among other things, by none other than Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike who the author interviewed while writing the book. During his research, the author also met with the surgeon Dr P.R. Anthonis and was able to narrate on a first-hand basis the events as they unfolded in the last moments in the life of the Prime Minister.

Candappa who was, since 1951, a reporter, feature writer, sub-editor, award winning poet, short story writer and correspondent for several prestigious overseas publications in the UK and USA and acknowledged by many in the profession, as one of the finest writers at the time. He had a close-up view of the personalities and events in the country, having met and in-

interviewed many, including SWRD, members of his Cabinet, leaders of the opposition parties, religious leaders and other important players who fashioned the destiny of the country.

With uncanny insight, Candappa has captured the mind of a leader in the throes of discerning his shortcomings in governing a nation amidst huge disruptive elements and so heavily weighed down by much negative media coverage. Candappa has seen the humanity of man; the great intellects at play and has brilliantly portrayed the greatness that seemed to elude many of SWRD's contemporaries and even some learned newspaper editors.

The book is alive with Sri Lankan people that we all encountered and knew; the genuine red blooded countrymen from all ages, sexes, walks of life, castes and creeds and he has imbued them with a vitality that

makes these characters run out of the pages. He portrays them with humour without ridicule, with sympathy without pity and a genuine love for a genuine race of people. The language is iridescent, the narrative pacy and while there are chapters where dialogue is essentially extensive in its discourse, as on the beginnings of the racial turmoil (for the benefit of the uninitiated) these passages do not tie down the reader as a lecture over a lectern.

This book will bring back memories of an era bygone, of endearing faces and familiar places of a much-loved Sri Lanka portrayed in a unique way that only a keen, creative and acutely observant artist can touch with delicacy.

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Highlights of the AGM held in Sydney on 6 December 2003



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Good music and hence good fun



There were lots more having fun, but space was allocated 'on age before beauty' principle, so beautiful people please forgive the editor.....



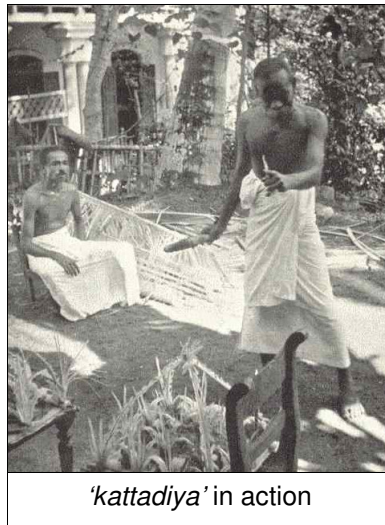
Exorcism - A Frightening Experience - I was there

by Vernon Kelly

The ceremony I witnessed occurred in 1958 in a little town on the Southwest coast of Sri Lanka called Wadduwa. I was at that time acting Executive Engineer in the Public Works Department for the District, and lived with a close friend who was Inspector of Excise for the Wadduwa area. The homes in the area were substantial brick and tile constructions, each set in about an acre of land, and each home had about five or six coconut trees. Domestic water was obtained from a well sunk in each garden. Opposite our residence was the home of the Assistant Excise Inspector whose wife had a seven or eight month old child. It was this lady, Mrs de Zoysa who required the exorcism.

Exorcism was practiced frequently in the village areas of Ceylon (Sri Lanka as it is now known) and was performed by specialized charmers or *KATTADIYAS* as they were called, well versed in the chanting of Sanskrit invocations to the traditional evil spirits. These ceremonies commenced at dusk and continued through the night till dawn. Considerable preparation was necessary to stage a ceremony. Firstly, several small altars, made of young coconut palm fronds were arranged in a semi circle, and two paper masks- life size figures of evil spirits were also made. In each altar was placed fruit and freshly cooked offerings of vegetables (no meat) in earthenware bowls.

Her husband, and subsequently we the neighbours, observed that, Mrs De Zoysa became restless at dusk each day, had fever, and also seemed to be less caring of the babe. This occurred after a large black dog frightened her at dusk at the garden well one day. Their western GP was consulted and for over a month no improvement to her behaviour or health occurred. Local Ayurvedic physicians had no success either, and it was then suggested that an “evil spirit” could possibly be the cause. Mrs de Zoysa was possibly “demon possessed”.



'kattadiya' in action

A “*Kattadiya*” was consulted, and he undertook to perform the ceremony. This ceremony was in two parts. A preliminary was performed a week before the main ritual.

On the appointed evening, the *kattadiya* and assistant appeared at about 10 p.m. and after some preliminary chanting and mantrams (incantations in Sanskrit), departed with Mr de Zoysa to a

local cemetery. My friend the Inspector, George Van Twest accompanied the party after he and I had synchronized our watches. Needless to say we were very sceptical but curious. I stayed back with Mrs de Zoysa and the servants.

Sharp at 12 midnight, as I had been warned to expect, Mrs de Zoysa burst into laughter and re-assumed her former quiet pleasant manner. The party returned from the cemetery at about 1 a.m. and George described what took place there. At 12 midnight sharp, after incantations over a grave which was less than 24 hours old, a cockerel was sacrificed and its blood spilled on the grave.

A few, that is 2 or 3 evenings later, George and I visited the de Zoysas across

the road, to find them at dinner in a room behind the main living area. Suddenly Mrs de Zoysa started frothing at the mouth, became very agitated, seized a table knife and exclaimed that she proposed to kill the *kattadiya*. I grabbed the knife from her while her husband, with difficulty restrained her. A moment later the *kattadiya* himself walked in, and Mrs de Zoysa had to be restrained from attacking him. The *kattadiya* chanted for a few minutes over the lady who calmed down and chatted to us.

The main ceremony of exorcism commenced as planned at the end of the week. It started at dusk in an area between the verandah, in which Mrs de Zoysa was seated with us, and the palm frond altars with their offerings. The tom-tom beating and the invocations by the *Kattadiya* with spells of vigorous 'devil dancing' by a professional assistant, started at dusk. As the evening wore on and the ceremony continued, Mrs de Zoysa became increasingly restive but was restrained to vigorous rocking.

At about midnight the *kattadiya* approached Mrs de Zoysa with the flower of a coconut palm in his hand, caught her by the hair, and began to lightly chastise her. He demanded of the "spirit" that he or it quit Mrs de Zoysa's body, as the requisite offerings and incantations had been made in propitiation. In a strange voice Mrs de Zoysa made a demand for a human sacrifice. Further incantation continued, and to a further demand Mrs de Zoysa replied requesting an animal sacrifice. This too was rejected. Finally Mrs de Zoysa was chastised again and reminded that the requisite food offerings had been made. She finally, in this strange voice agreed, upon which the *kattadiya* requested a significant sign. I then interjected and said that I would nominate the required sign. I pointed to a particular tall coconut palm and requested the tearing down of a whole branch. As I

finished speaking this very branch crashed some forty feet to the ground. Mrs de Zoysa gave a most fiendish laugh with an indescribably evil expression on her face, and then returned to her usual relaxed personality.

The cleansing ceremony then took place. The heavily bearded dancer had a rod, a foot or so in length, wrapped in cloth soaked in petrol thrust between his jaws and set alight. His face could not be seen for the flames. Taken by the hand he was led by the *kattadiya* through every room of the house, and on his return to the front of the home, collapsed on the ground. When revived we noted that not a hair on his beard was even singed.

Just before the "Spirit" quit Mrs de Zoysa, in response to questions by the *kattadiya*, she said that she or it was the spirit of Mrs de Zoysa's mother, and that she considered that the daughter had conspired with the doctor to bring about her death.

Mrs de Zoysa's mind was a complete blank to all these events from the time she encountered the black dog at the well.

A month later I quietly brought conversation with Mrs de Zoysa back to her pre-marriage home life and family, and learned that her mother had died soon after she was asked by the family doctor to help in giving her sick mother an injection. Needless to say, both George and I were rather nervous for at least a week, to walk out alone after dusk, particularly as there were no streetlights along the lane. AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE!

Back in the middle ages!!

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to ripen so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

SYNOPSIS OF MEETING

Melbourne –October 2003

Dr Srilal Fernando introduced the evening's speaker, Dr Nihal Kuruppu whose subject was "Martin Wickramasinghe (1890-1976)". Dr Kuruppu, a lecturer in International Relations and Political Science is currently working on a book on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the research for which took him to Cambridge and New Delhi. An interesting aspect of his study was that he considered that Wickramasinghe, the writer, and Nehru, the politician, shared many similarities in thinking.

Being the son-in-law of Sri Lanka's foremost writer, Dr Kuruppu was in a unique position to speak from personal knowledge on all aspects of his life and work. He had first visited him at his home as a boy accompanied by his mother, so his association with this distinguished literary figure dated from this early stage in his life. In later years, when he became a family member, he spent many hours with Martin Wickramasinghe and came to be familiar with his views on many subjects, as well as becoming closely acquainted with his works.

As is generally known, the writer left an enormous literary legacy to posterity: over 70 books as well as innumerable short stories, articles and essays which dealt with a large range of subjects including Art, Literature, Philosophy, Buddhism, Anthropology and Evolution. Martin Wickramasinghe wrote in Sinhala and English, he had a deep interest in English poetry, especially Milton, Marlowe, Wordsworth, Byron and Shelley, and he made deep explorations into the nature of the human psyche, which led to his abiding interest in the roles of religion and politics in shaping that psyche. He was not just a writer but also a public intellectual of the highest calibre with a formidable intellect. He had travelled to the Soviet Union, India and China, among other countries and was well versed in European literature with some of his books translated into several European languages.

Dr Kuruppu went on to a detailed examination and scrutiny of the ideas of some of Martin's best known works in Sinhala and English, including a useful chronology of milestones in his life beginning with his birth and ending with his death in 1976.

Perhaps the most celebrated works of Sinhala fiction are "Gam Peraliya" (The Changing Village, 1944), "Kaliyugaya" (Era of Kali, 1957) and "Yugantaya" (The End of an Age, 1949), known collectively as the Trilogy. The village was very important to the author and the idea that it takes an entire village to raise one child was crucial to his system of belief. In the novels he traces the decline of the village as it changes with its submission to the pressures of modern influences, particularly the capitalist ethos that dominates the growth of the town. The writer recognizes the inevitability of change but he is also deeply protective of the village environment and village values. He captures in his writing, the effects on people and the paradoxical nature of human beings whose capacity for good conflicts with their capacity for greed and evil. Cultural, social and moral relativism are closely analysed but in terms of powerful and revealing fiction. These were the novels that were brought to the screen by Lester James Peries, spreading the impact of these works at all levels of society and winning accolades and awards for both the writer and the filmmaker.

The book "Bhavathananaya" focuses on the more human qualities of the Buddha. This work of non-fiction crossed forbidden boundaries and essayed controversial interpretations. The research and reasoning drew a lot of hostility. It was also disarmingly self-critical demonstrating that writers were also subject to the complexities of cultural processes and development. It was a point of view delivered in the spirit rather than the letter of Buddhism. Martin also wrote, among others, "The Russian Novel", "Revolution and Evolution" and a book on the Mysticism of D. H. Lawrence, in English. The range of subject material, ideas, analysis and discussion in these can only be

suggested briefly, for example, at random: the common theme of sadness/suffering in the Russian writers and in the Buddhist Jataka stories, the drastic social change involving psycho-social mutation that constitutes revolution, not unlike the evolutionary process hypothesised in Darwin's theory of genetic variation and natural selection, Lawrence's ideas influenced by Indian and Tantric philosophy and focused on the spiritual nature of the relationship between the sexes.

As a man of towering moral and intellectual stature, Martin frowned on the blind conformity of convention. He was quick to perceive injustice in the economic and social systems prevailing, he deplored the chasm between the English and Sinhala educated classes, he was concerned about rural workers and urban workers, he was a defender of folk culture and yet endorsed progressive ideas and beneficial change. He condemned colonialism and had an innate desire for the freedom of Sri Lanka and India from the oppression and indignity of colonialism. He was also an attractive human being who had a sense of humour and strong familial ties. Above all, he had a sure sense of the mysteries and perhaps, the sacred, in human nature.

Dr Kuruppu spoke of the wonderfully supportive role that Martin's wife, Mrs Prema Wickramasinghe played in his life as she was also his secretary and re-copied his drafts in perfect script for publication. He also showed pictures of the Museum and Cultural Centre that has been established in Koggala in Martin's memory, in a complex that occupies seven acres of land around the writer's original home. His very professional use of slides to underline the main points of the talk was very useful to the audience. 53 people attended this meeting, which was of absorbing interest and an excellent survey of the life and genius of Martin Wickramasinghe. Dr Sarath Gunatunga won the raffle prize, which was a Wickramasinghe book, generously donated by the family.

Shelagh Goonewardene

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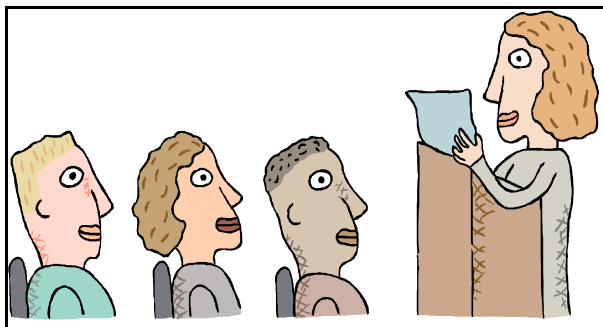
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E-mail: winston@secura.com.au
and request an application form

NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

Sunday 22nd February 2004 at 6.30 p.m

**Sena Atukorale, former Director
Headworks Mahaweli Authority of
Sri Lanka**

Will speak on: Ancient and Modern
Irrigation Works in Sri Lanka-

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 7th March at 5.30 p.m.

Gerald Cooray MA Cantab, Dip Ed Lond
will speak on
Education in Ceylon—A Centenary Volume
1869-1969

Followed by launch of book by
ECT Candappa

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

For further information please contact

Shelagh –AH 9808 4962
Or Srilal –AH 9809 1004

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 February/ March - 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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Where applicable, contributors are requested to annotate bibliographical references to facilitate further research & study by interested members.

The Editorial Committee of THE CEYLANKAN, at its discretion, now accepts advertisements for products and services suitable for our members. Those related to genealogy, antiquarian and contemporary books, maps, art, memorabilia, and other collectibles are welcome. For further details and rates please contact Publications Officer Mike Udabage at Int + 61 2 9902 2774
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Geo Steuart & Co --a personal memoir 1952-1973

By Tony Peries

Geo Steuart & Co Ltd is the oldest mercantile firm in Sri Lanka, having been established in 1835. Tony Peries, first employed by them in 1952 as an apprentice tea taster, went on to become its Chairman/Chief Executive & has written a personal memoir of that time (paperback, 228 pages, printed & published in Colombo 2003). The book was reviewed in Journal no 24 Nov 2003. It is not a recital of historical fact but a racy account of a turbulent period with vivid comments on political & commercial personalities of the time. The book will appeal to planters of that era & others engaged in commerce.

Available from the treasurer at \$20 of which \$5 will be donated to the Ceylon Society of Australia."