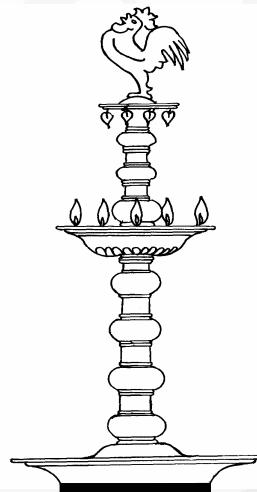


THE CEYLANKAN



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Editorial <i>Sumane Iyer</i> | 2 |
| Oh! To be an Engine Driver <i>Victor Melder</i> | 3 |
| Ceylon Volunteers in the First World War (c.1914-1918) Part 2 <i>Sergei de Silva Ranasinghe</i> | 6 |
| An Almost Forgotten Icon <i>The Raconteurs</i> | 9 |
| Earthquakes, Volcanoes & the History of Ceylon <i>Allen L Thurairatnam</i> | 11 |
| Growing up in a Village in the 50s & 60s - Part 3 <i>Siri Gamage</i> | 12 |
| My Expulsion from Ceylon & Adventurous Escape—John Hagenbeck <i>Translated by Ulli Meng</i> | 15 |
| “Tavalams” - One Time Ships of Sri Lankan Forests <i>Vama Vamadevan</i> | 18 |
| Remembering the Depression and More <i>Decima Perera</i> | 20 |
| Book Review <i>Lakshmi de Silva</i> | 23 |
| Synopses of Meetings <i>Sydney -Tony Peries</i> <i>Melbourne -Shelagh Goonewardene</i> | 24 |
| A “veray parfit gentil knight”? Some glimpses of the enigmatic Sir Herbert Dowbiggin, I.G.P. Ceylon <i>Joe Simpson</i> | 26 |

EDITORIAL



The first two lines of my favourite Quatrain from The Rubaiyat goes like this:

*Oh, come fill the Cup:- what boots it to repeat
How time is slipping underneath our Feet*

...that's right, another year has slipped by and we did not even feel it. It is time to thank our writer contributors who have added lustre to

these columns over the past twelve months so much so it prompted an experienced journalist to say a few nice things about *The Ceylankan*. The Review that appeared in some Sri Lankan Newspapers(loose leaf enclosed for those who missed it) is certainly encouraging. My email box overflowed for almost two weeks since its appearance and quite a number of new members have enrolled—just to read your Journal. Bar a handful, all contributors are non professional writers. So it is OK to pat ourselves on the back. For those among you who are yet to take the plunge, read page 22. Now, there is encouragement: Emeritus Professor Yasmine Gooneratne has corralled a group of experienced, prize winning authors under the banner “Guardian Angels” to help you prospective writers over the bar. No more excuses now.

The Editorial Team wishes all members and future writers the very best for the Festive Season and a Prosperous New Year -2006.

19th Century Images



THE MINSTREL PRIEST.
(HINDOO SACERDOTAL BEGGAR.)
[From a Sketch by John K.L. Vandort.]



Photo: Garratt Loco -courtesy Gavin Hamilton *

Oh! To be an Engine Driver

by *Victor Melder*

Once upon a time, when steam was King, it was every young boy's dream to become a steam locomotive driver. Mine was no different; it was heightened by the fact that my father was an engine driver too. Unfortunately, with dieselization and the disappearance of the steam loco, this dream has now vanished for most young boys.

My grandfather, Victor Melder, was a Guard on the Ceylon Government Railway and served from 1897 to 1926, when he passed away prematurely of a heart attack. My father, Randolph Melder, served the railways as an Engine Driver from 1923 to 1963.

It was a colonial tradition, that sons of employees in many services were given preference to employment in the field of their father's occupation. This was also true with the railways, where sons of railway men had preference. It was argued that with their father being a railway man they would be aware of the vagaries of the job and therefore be more suited to it.

I had to wait until 1956 before I was to realise my dream, but was able to get in by about three months, as the cut off point was 21 years and had the recruitment program been initiated three months later, I would have missed out on the age criteria.

The recruitment notice specified the candidates should have passed the Senior School Certificate, (English) its equivalent or

higher, but for sons of past or present employees of the Ceylon Government Railway (CGR) the Junior School Certificate (English) or higher. Railway Firemen with adequate experience, Seventh Standard (English) or higher.

Other criteria were that applicants must be of good physique, height not less than 5 feet 5 inches (without shoes or socks) and chest measurement not less than 33 inches (normal). Appointment was subject to a medical examination and eyesight test.

Selected applicants would be on probation for three months. Provided their work and conduct during this period were satisfactory, they would be retained in service and indentured for 5 years apprenticeship. Written tests were held at the end of 8 months training and again at the end of the second year of training to assess the suitability of the trainees.

During the period of apprenticeship, they had to attend instruction classes and perform whatever duties assigned to them. They were subject to the authority of the drivers to whom they were booked to work with.

Rate of pay /day of the apprentices were:

| | |
|-------------|---------|
| First year | Rs 2.20 |
| Second year | Rs 2.60 |
| Third year | Rs 3.00 |
| Fourth year | Rs 3.40 |
| Fifth year | Rs 3.80 |

AU\$1=SLRs75 as of Sept 2005 - Ed

* www.users.pownet.co.uk

On completion of training, apprentices would be required to pass a theoretical and practical test to prove their suitability for appointment to the grade of Engine Driver, Class III, to fill any existing vacancies. Those who failed were re-examined at the end of another year. If one failed the second - you were out for good.

Applications for apprenticeships closed on June 21, 1956. I was interviewed by a panel of three (which included Mr Maxwell Sparkes, C.C.S, who was seconded for Railway service) on 18 September 1956 at the General Manager's Office, C.G.R., Colombo. A fortnight later I was informed by post that my application and interview had been successful and that I report for duty on 9.00am on October 16, 1956.

As I lived at Nawalapitiya at the time of application, I had to attend a medical examination and eye sight test at the Kandy General Hospital, prior to taking up duties. Needless to say, this was successful. And so began an arduous and rigorous training schedule, which in my case was extended by eight months, due to the fact that I was eight months off work, having contracted Infective Hepatitis in 1958, having drunk contaminated water off a steam locomotive tender. The department was kind enough to allow me three months light duty (off the footplate) giving me time to recover further.

There were fifty apprentices recruited and we were given the title Special Apprentice Driver (SAD), we were numbered from 51 to 100 (don't ask me why), and my official position was SAD 63. The title Special Apprentice was because we were being trained on both steam and diesel locomotives. A normal steam apprenticeship was of four years duration, in our case an extra year was tagged on for diesel locomotives.

Of the fifty apprentices appointed, one was a complete outsider, twenty two were sons of railway men and twenty seven were firemen promoted from the ranks. Before ap-

pointment as Engine Driver, one went AWOL, two (from the ranks) were demoted for falsifying education certificates and one failed the eye test, whilst three emigrated to UK and Australia, leaving only the balance forty four to pass out as engine drivers.

The first three months were quite a novelty indeed, working in the sprawling Dematagoda Running Shed, acquainting ourselves with the various steam locos in service. The daily grind consisted mainly in cleaning the boilers and tenders of the locos and also checking the under carriages of the bogie tables by working in the pits, as this was the only access to them. It was a mundane 7.00 am to 4.00pm job, with an hour off for lunch from 11.00 to 12 noon. We worked a five day week, plus half day Saturday. All the apprentices were deemed fit to carry on their training and had to sign the indenture papers in typical 'bureaucraticese' - as seen below

INDENTURE

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS that I, Randolph Johnny Victor Melder, of No 48, Railway Bungalow, Nawalapitiya (hereinafter referred to as the Apprentice) am held and firmly bound unto Her Majesty Elizabeth II, Queen of Ceylon and of Her other Realms and other Territories, Head of the Commonwealth, Her Heirs and Successors in the sum of Rupees Seven Hundred and Fifty (Rs 750.00) lawful money of Ceylon to be paid on Demand in Colombo to Her said Majesty, Her Heir and Successors for which payment to be well and truly made, I do hereby bind myself and my heirs, executors and administrators firmly by these presents.

Dated at Colombo, this 25th day of January, One Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty Seven.

WHEREAS by an agreement dated at Colombo on the 16th day of October, One Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty Six

AND WHEREAS in and by the said Agreement it was agreed that the said apprentice should prior to his admission to the said apprenticeship enter into a bond in the sum of Rupees Seven Hundred and Fifty (Rs 750.00) as security for the performance and fulfillment of the terms and conditions of the said agreement and for the payment to the Government of Ceylon of all monies expended on or paid to him

during the period of training in the event of a breach of any of the terms and conditions of the said agreement.

Now the condition of the above written bond or obligation is such that if the said apprentice shall faithfully perform and fulfill the terms and conditions contained in the said agreement and in the event of any breach of the terms and conditions thereof pay to the Government of Ceylon the sum of Rupees Seven Hundred and Fifty (Rs 750.00) then this bond or obligation shall be null and void otherwise the same shall be and remain in full force operation and virtue.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said Apprentice hath hereunto set his hand at Colombo this 25th day of January 1957.

R. J. V. Melder (signed)
(Signature of Apprentice)

THE PITS were dangerous places to work in, they were about 4 to 5 feet deep, had a few inches of water running through them constantly and plenty of oil that had drained off the locos, whilst being serviced, so one had to step very gingerly. As these were locos that were in steam, one had to be wary of falling embers. The bogie tables, generally had ash and other grit that had to be scraped off and oiled. Occasionally one would find pieces of putrefying flesh from animals run over by the locos.

The next three months was spent working with an assigned fitter on the various locos, carrying out minor repairs, again this was a day job, with Sundays off. The following three months were indeed an eye opener as we were assigned as firemen on the steam shunting locos working round the clock, seven days a week at both Maligawatte Yard and Colombo Goods Yard (between Maradana and Fort Stations).

The shunting locos at Maligawatte Yard worked in the carriage stabling yard, where passenger trains were formed and made ready for service. Colombo yard, was mainly a goods or freight wagon yard which served as arrival and departure point. As such there was an inwards yard and an outwards yard. There was constant movement at these yards both by day and night. It was interesting fir-

ing these shunting locos, where the pace of movement was slow and easy, preparing one for the hectic pace on the footplate for the passenger services.

The next three months, saw us once again in



Steam train pulling out - somewhere in Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

the Dematagoda Running Shed working with the fitters on heavy and large repairs. This section of the work was with locos that were out of service, unlike the second three months, which were mainly running repairs. This was again a mundane job of five and a half days. All of a sudden the first year had come to an end, combined with the practical work, the lectures and demonstrations, one had by now a working knowledge of steam locos and was trained to carry out minor repairs, so much so, as to be able to nurse a disabled loco home, rather than seek assistance enroute.

To be concluded in J 33

Train Crash

Roy is applying for a high paying executive job at the railroad and during the interview, an inspector asks him, "What would you do if you saw two trains were heading towards each other on the same track?" Roy says, "I would switch one train to another track." "What if the lever broke?" asks the inspector. "Then I'd use the manual lever," answers Roy. "What if that had been struck by lightning?" asks the inspector. "I'd use the phone to call the next signal box." "What if the phone was busy?" "I'd use the public phone near the station." "What if that had been vandalized?" "If that happened," Roy answers, "I'd run home and get Carla." The inspector asked, "Why would you do that?" "**Because Carla has never seen a train crash.**"

Courtesy—jokesnjokes

Ceylon Volunteers in the First World War (c.1914-1918)

Part 2

By *Sergei de Silva-Ranasinghe*

In the distant theatre of Mesopotamia, Private Walter De Moor, who in 1916 enlisted in the Royal West Surrey Regiment, recollected the irony of his first combat experience: "It put me in mind of one of those big field days we had in camp at Diyatalawa plus some shells tearing over our heads."

Lieutenant Basil Arthur Horsfall of St. Thomas's College was one of three Ceylon volunteers awarded the British Empire's highest gallantry medal, the Victoria Cross. His senior officer, Lieutenant Colonel Rickman described the event: "In the action fought on 26 and 27 March, 1918, the Battalion was holding the ridge between Ablainzeville and Moyeuvre... The enemy attacked very heavily. Your son was commanding the left platoon of my left company. The next battalion prolonged the line towards Moyeuvre, and were driven off the ridge, but your son continued to hold the position. I received a message from him saying that he had been driven back, but that he was counter-attacking; which he most successfully did, driving the enemy back, and gaining his objective, he being wounded severely at the time... Throughout the day, very heavy fighting was continued: twice your son left his position, but each time he counter-attacked driving the enemy back. He held his ground though his company had lost 135 out of 180 engaged. In the evening, when both my flanks were driven in on my headquarters, I sent written instructions to your son to retire to the line Ayette... During the retirement he was unfortunately killed close to the ridge which he had so gallantly held for two days. His body had to be left where he fell, and the ridge has been in the possession of the enemy ever since. But his splendid example and devotion to duty undoubtedly saved a very critical

situation."

Private Kruger Van Sanden of the KRRC, who served on the Western Front was captured and interned as a Prisoner of War (POW) in Germany until the war's end. He later found that his brother, Private Harry G. Van Sanden, who served with him in the 11th battalion KRRC in the same incident he was captured, was not wounded but killed in September, 1917 at Ypres. Kruger later described what happened: "About poor Harry's death, it is very sad indeed. When we went over the top to capture the German 'pill-boxes,' he was about ten yards away from me, right in front of the machine gun, and I saw him topple over, being hit in the head. The stretcher-bearer shouted out to me, he got a 'Blighty,' and I was jolly glad to see him go away in the stretcher to the aid-post."

These comprehensible interpretations demonstrate the amazing and varied experiences of Ceylon's volunteers at the frontline. Arguably, for a small colony its record of service to the British Empire transpired to be an interesting one.



Pte P Ondatje
Wounded & POW
Late of Trinity
College Kandy

Ceylon's War Effort: Casualties, Decorations & Statistics

Throughout the war the CDF served as a useful manpower reserve to the British Empire. Practically every CDF unit had participants who either enlisted in the selected contingents sent overseas, or on an individual basis. The Ceylon Medical Corps (CMC) is credited with 19 volunteers; the Ceylon Garrison Artillery (CGA) with 100; the CLI with 145 and the CMR with roughly 200 volunteers. However, the seemingly largest manpower contribution from any CDF unit derived from the CPRC, which provided between 800-1000 commissioned officers to the British Army and its other auxiliary armed forces. Unlike most other colonies of the Empire, close to 50% of Ceylon's volunteers were commissioned as officers during the war. Most of the

volunteers, including the Ceylonese, came from educated upper and middle class backgrounds. They tended to have previous affiliation to the Ceylon Cadet Battalion the feeder unit to the CDF; military experience in the British Army; and or were associated to a CDF formation.

Other social institutions such as the Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) recorded 140 of its members who served. Throughout the entire war, combined estimates plateau around 2,000-2,500 Ceylon volunteers who served overseas. Unfortunately, the available nominal rolls of honour have considerable overlap with names. Therefore, in absence of conclusive information, the cumulative figure needs to be more thoroughly researched and quantified.

Although cumulative and precise casualty statistics on Ceylon's volunteers are difficult to locate, of the 1,250 Ceylon volunteers estimated by the Times of Ceylon in 1917, there were 105 fatalities (84 killed in action; 21 died of wounds), 114 wounded and 18 who were either missing or POWs. Moreover, from the figures shown in the Table 'College Affiliation, Enlistment & Casualties of Ceylon Volunteers', out of 330 Ceylon volunteers who enlisted from the four English medium schools analyzed, a ratio of 1:3 or 30% were casualties. The elite Colombo Club recorded 18 members killed, while the CPA estimated 127 of its members were killed. Many of these planters were affiliated to CDF units, principally the CMR and CPRC. It is believed that the CPRC suffered overall losses of 80 killed and 99 wounded in the First World War, according to its one-time Commanding Officer, Colonel TY Wright (c.1904-1912).

Many Ceylon volunteers received decorations for their services during the First World War. This was especially the case for soldiers affiliated with the CPRC, which had an estimated 100 decorations awarded, including a Victoria Cross. From the four colleges analysed in Table 2, at least 79 Ceylon volunteers were

awarded decorations for exemplary service and gallantry. However, that figure is likely to be much higher, perhaps closer to the margin of one hundred and fifty, as the lists analysed have insufficient detail about their service records. Exclusive of Basil Horsfall, at least another two Ceylon volunteers were awarded the Victoria Cross. The first recipient was apparently awarded this honour in a highly controversial action. Second Lieutenant GRD

Moor of the 2nd Battalion Hampshire Regiment who on the 6 June 1915 at the Battle of Krithia Vineyard at Cape Helles, prevented tired British troops from routing in the face of a Turkish infantry attack, by shooting dead four of his own soldiers and stabilizing the line in his area. However, this incident was only generically described in *The London Gazette*, No. 29240, dated 23rd July 1915:

"For most conspicuous bravery and resource on 5th June, 1915, during operations south of Krithia, Dardenelles. When a detachment of his battalion on his left, which had lost all its officers, was rapidly retiring before a heavy Turkish attack, Second Lieutenant Moor, immediately grasping the danger to the remainder of the line, dashed back some 200 yards, stemmed the retirement, led back the men, and recaptured the lost trench. This young officer, who only joined the army in October, 1914, by his personal bravery and presence of mind, saved a dangerous situation." Later in the war he was awarded the Military Cross and Bar before he died of pneumonia in 1918 prior to the cessation of fighting.

The second recipient of the award was Major SW Loudoun-Shand of the 10th Battalion Yorkshire Regiment, who was killed in action in France on 1 July 1916. His award was acknowledged in *The London Gazette*, No. 29740, dated 8th September 1916: "For most conspicuous bravery. When his company attempted to climb over the parapet to attack the enemy's trenches, they were met by very fierce machine gun fire, which temporarily



2nd Lieut. John Still
wounded and POW in
Gallipoli 1915

stopped their progress. Major Loudoun-Shand immediately leapt on the parapet, helped the men over it, and encouraged them in every way until he fell mortally wounded. Even then he insisted on being propped up in the trench, and went on encouraging the non-commissioned officers and men until he died.”

In addition, the contribution of some Ceylon volunteers is worthy of reference. Although no Ceylonese is known to have been awarded the Victoria Cross, Private Harold R Jacotine of the 3rd Battalion Coldstream Guards was perhaps one of the closest. His outstanding act of gallantry led to him being posthumously awarded the Military Medal at the Battle of Lys in France. In a letter dated 6 May 1918 to Jacotine’s father, a member of the Coldstream Guards wrote: “...he did splendidly in the recent action when he was killed. He was in a post on the flank of his company and the enemy were working round his flank. When the rest of the men in his post had become casualties he continued to hold up the enemy by himself until he was unfortunately killed... he proved himself to be a brave Coldstreamer.” The desperate encounter, initiated by German infantry, took place on 13 April 1918 near the Forest of Nieppe in Belgium, saw the decimation of Jacotine’s company. Against formidable odds, Private Jacotine by himself held his machine gun post and kept the enemy at bay for nearly 20 minutes, before being killed.

Vere Modder of the Rifle Brigade was awarded the Military Medal for gallantry at the Third Battle of Ypres when he rescued his wounded officer under heavy enemy fire. Modder, who later received an officer commission in the British Army, was considered: “...a fine example of Ceylonese manhood... He never drank, never swore, and never even smoked.”

PD Pelpola was a survivor of the ill-fated Ville de la Ciotat, who served in France with the 28th, 4th, 6th and 5th battalions of the Royal Fusiliers. He consequently joined the 25th Battalion Royal Fusiliers (Legion of Fron-

tiersmen), and was deployed on operations in the German East Africa campaign, the largest and longest campaign fought in Africa, where he was wounded. Pelpola was later elected a member of the Legion of Frontiersmen, the only Ceylonese believed to have been awarded the honour.

Sergeant DB Seneviratne is perhaps the most decorated Sinhalese volunteer of the First World War. In 1916 he enlisted in 29th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, and later served in the 18th and 13th Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers. He was wounded in France twice respectively at Beaumont-Hamel in 1916 and Arras in 1917, before he was transferred to the (Queens Own) Royal West Kent Regiment in 1918. While with the West Kent’s, Seneviratne was gassed at Ypres, yet he continued to serve. Acknowledged for “good patrol work”, he was promoted to Corporal in August 1918 and in September to a Sergeant. For bravery on 22 October 1918, Seneviratne was awarded the Military Medal for “conspicuous gallantry, devotion to duty and able leadership at Knokke.” After the war, he served with the British Army of occupation in Germany from December 1918 until 1919. Other examples include, HS Paynter who joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1915 and was purportedly credited for shooting down the last Austrian aeroplane before the signing of the armistice in 1918. JWS Bartholomeusz is likely to have been the only Ceylonese to have joined the French Foreign Legion. While in France he was wounded and awarded the French Croix de Guerre (Cross of War) First Class. P. Dinguru who was twice wounded at Mons and La Bassee was considered to have been the first ‘Asiatic’ soldier to reach the Western Front as a member of the Belgium Army Service Corps.

Amongst the more prestigious war trophies given to the Ceylonese, was a captured German Maxim machine gun by King George V (c.1911-1936) as a gift to Trinity College for valorous conduct during the First World War. At the unveiling ceremony after the war, Ceylon’s Governor Brigadier-General Sir William Manning (c.1918-1925), stated: “I hope in

days to come, if the Empire is again menaced, this College and Ceylon will go on better." In response, some of the decorated old boys present, such as Richard Aluvihare, later Sir Richard Aluvihare, who served with the YMCA in France with Indian troops and Mentioned in Despatches by General Haig, stated: "It is indeed a source of great joy for us, who went to the Front, to find that His Majesty the King and Emperor has conferred a single honour by presenting a war trophy to Trinity College which we love."

Indeed the Governor's statement did relate, not just to Trinity, but other colleges as well. Twenty one years later, Ceylon the 'model colony', again participated, in far greater numbers in the Second World War (c.1939-1945).

| <u>College Affiliation, Enlistment and Casualties of Ceylon Volunteers (c.1914-1918)</u> | | | | |
|---|----------|------------|---------|-----|
| College | Enlisted | Fatalities | Wounded | POW |
| Royal | 88 | 5 | 13 | 3 |
| St Thomas | 86 | 14 | n/a | n/a |
| Kingswood | 84 | 13 | 15 | n/a |
| Trinity | 72 | 13 | 18 | 2 |
| Total | 330 | 45 | 46 | 5 |

Acknowledgements: This article is a revised version of *Ceylon Volunteers in the First World War (c.1914-1918)*, first published as a three part series in *The Sunday Times, (Sri Lanka)* - "In Defence of Empire" (November 14, 2004), p.6; "Courage Under Fire" (November 21, 2004), p.4; "On the Roll of Honour" (November 28, 2004), p.11. The author would also like to acknowledge the kind and valuable assistance provided by the following people: Ruhanie Perera; Glen Hodgins; Victor Melder of the *Victor Melder Sri Lanka Library*; Professor John Dalton, *Bond University* (Australia); Shaun Aumua and Charles Ameresekere.

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An Almost Forgotten Icon

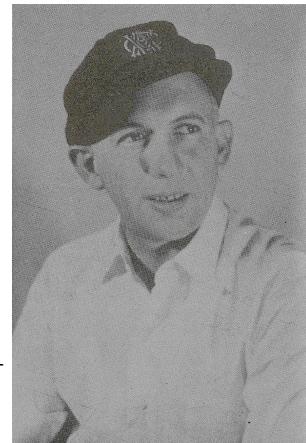
by "The Raconteurs"

The authors are indebted to the late Harold de Andrado for much of the following material which was drawn from an article written by him in "The Island" of 22 August 1986.

Pat Mc McCarthy is, we think, little remembered by Sri Lankans today, though he was the first from that country to play Sheffield Shield cricket here for Western Australia, and was an all round sportsman of the most remarkable ability.

He was first heard of at the age of eight, winning an award at the Havelock Golf Club, for driving a ball 125 yards and creating quite a sensation by holing in three strokes. At eleven he was junior athletics champion at Royal College and

he continued to be champ in the different grades until he left school excelling in the Pole Vault, High Jump, Putt Shot and the sprints. He was Public School Champion in the Pole Vault falling short of Dep's record by 3 inches and he was runner up in the sprints, not to mention his grand relay racing. In the Olympic context he was truly a decathlon champion. At 13 he was Juvenile Tennis Champion of Sri Lanka, and subsequently won the Junior Championships in Colombo, Galle and Bandarawela. Together with Douglas Scharenguivel whom he beat in the singles, and who was the first Sri Lankan to play at Wimbledon, he won the doubles beating a redoubtable pair in Koo De Saram and Kantawala. At 15 he won the Open Handicap Singles at Bandarawela. He was an excellent inside three quarter at Rug-



ger and in his Army days (with the CGA) during the war, was a prolific goal scorer as a forward at soccer and hockey. He excelled at Billiards though he was no Lindrum, but was as good as Sir Don Bradman at his own tables in his home at Kensington Park, Adelaide.

To further enhance Pat's versatility he was a crack swimmer and a pioneer member of Sri Lanka's Life Saving Squad. Between the age of 30 and 45 he was one of Australia's leading Golfers playing in the top class company of their greatest professionals, Peter Thompson, Kel Nagle and Co and holding his own among them. He was a superb cyclist and as a gunner in his war days excelled in rifle shooting.

Cricket however was his first love. Having played only tennis ball cricket up to the age of 10, he had never attended a day's practice when at the age of 12 he came into the Royal Under 16 team as a stop gap, being summoned by Royal Principal Sampson a few hours before the Junior (under 16) match against St Thomas. The team included Bertie Porritt, Upali Senanayake, F.H.de Saram, Rasa Rockwood, Sam Kadrigamar, Rodney Porritt, Bunny Thiedeman, Douglas Scharenguivel, M. Sivanathan, and Lucien de Zoysa. Sent in at No 11 Pat to the amazement of everyone top scored with 67 not out figuring in a last wicket stand of 96 with Lucien de Zoysa. Promoted to open in the second innings he top scored again with 44 and played a major role in Royal's six wicket victory. This was really the beginning of a tremendous story of a cricketing genius. At 13 he was in the First Eleven and in his debut against Zahira he top scored with 60. At 14 plus he played in his first Royal Thomian and yet again made a half century to top score for Royal. In his second year he top scored for Royal again with 98 in the Big Match. In his final year as captain he made 81 and played a great part in Royal's innings victory. He made over 2000 runs in his school career at an average of 43.25 including five centuries and fifteen

half centuries (in those years Royal played only 6 matches per season)

At the age of 15 he joined the Nondescripts where his father W.G. Mc McCarthy a famous former Thomian cricketer was member. If Cecil Horan was NCC's greatest bowler, he was certainly their greatest batsman. NCC have produced prolific run getters in Vernon Prins, Michael Tissera, Ranjit Fernando and Stanley Jayasinghe, but they would not surpass Pat. He was to the NCC what Sargo Jayawickreme was to the SSC and M. Sathasivam to the Tamil Union. From his school days till he left Sri Lanka in 1948 he scored his 1000 runs per year unfailingly, except in the early forties when war interrupted cricket which was thereby limited. No batsman ever treated paceman D.S. Jayasundera as mercilessly as Pat did with the possible exception of T.H. (Tommy) Kelaart. Pat made a magnificent 88 against Vijay Merchant's All India Team against the pace of Bannerjee, Rangachari, Hazare, and Amarnath, and the wiles of Mankad, Sarwate, and C.S. Nayudu. This innings which was more than half our total score consisted of a dozen boundaries and two soaring sixers right over and out of the Colombo Oval. One of the authors a schoolboy at the time, vividly recalls being an enthralled spectator. Pat played against the 1938 Australian team as a schoolboy and apart from taking two splendid catches to dismiss Jack Fingleton and Bill Brown, he gave a polished display of batting together with John Pulle. As a schoolboy he was also invited to represent the Rest of India in the Bombay Pentangular and played a dazzling innings of 87. Pat toured Australia in 1936 as a schoolboy with Ryle de Soysa's Royal College Team. His batting impressed eminent cricketers like Sir Donald Bradman, Vic Richardson, Clarrie Grimmett (who bowled to him at the nets) and to W.M. Woodful then Principal of Melbourne High School. Pat was Royal's leading run getter on that tour and Woodful considered him superior to Keith Miller at the time playing for Melbourne High School. Fifteen years

later when he had settled down in Australia, playing for Western Australia Vs N.S.W. at Sydney, he thrashed the attack of Keith Miller, Ray Lindwall, Alan Davidson, Ritchie Benaud and Allan Walker to score 98 in record time and earn praise and congratulations from the Duke of Edinburgh who was an interested spectator at that Sheffield Shield Game. Pat was particularly severe on Benaud whom he hit for three sixes and 10 fours. Few were aware that weeks earlier he had undergone surgery for appendicitis. In the second innings too he top scored with 44. Another hurricane display was his 88 against South Australia when Sir Don walked into the dressing room and congratulated him saying it was the brightest innings he had seen for the season. 1951 was his greatest year in Australia where in 14 innings he made 980 runs at the incredible average of 108. In his Sheffield Shield career he had the princely average of 50.3 and his A Grade performances for Mount Lawley make fantastic reading. His grade average was 59 with several centuries and he was a successful Captain at Mount Lawley and a competent West Australian Coach. Dennis Lillee still testifies to the early help given to him by Pat.

Pat Mc Carthy the dashing batsman, and consummate athlete was indeed a man for all seasons. Sri Lanka was denied the benefits of his richly endowed talents as he migrated to Australia when he was 28 years of age. Malcolm Abeyratne a friend who lived close to the Mc Carthy's during Pat's school days at Royal, recalls him with affection in an article written 30 years ago. Says he "I remember Pat in his Fiat with his father at the wheel, chugging importantly along Gregory's Road overtaking all the buggy carts with their loads of schoolchildren. Pat would wink at the girls and then look wickedly at his father who would glower with mock ferocity. Pat had the magnetism and aura- the charisma of a film star. His batting was polished and technical as well as a dramatic performance".

Pat still lives in Perth where he has three sons and many grandchildren. Sadly, he is not in the best of health though far from being bedridden. His comprehensive scrapbooks in the possession of his son Kerry are a fascinating record of another era. Pat was almost without doubt the greatest all round sportsman from Royal College in its history spanning over 150 years.

Earthquakes, Volcanoes & the History of Ceylon

by Allen L Thurairatnam

On December 26th 2004, the earthquake off Aceh on the Island of Sumatra, Indonesia triggered tsunamis that killed over 30,000 people in Sri Lanka. Careful study of recorded history shows similar events.

On Monday morning 27th August 1883, Krakatoa volcano in the Sunda Straits between Sumatra and Java exploded hurling 6 cubic miles of matter into the atmosphere. Gigantic tsunamis reaching a height of over 100ft destroying several villages in Indonesia and killing over 30,000 people followed this event.



Krakatoa's explosions created tsunamis that reached the southern coast of Ceylon around 1.30pm on 27th August 1883. The wave heights were estimated to be 12ft.

One woman was drowned at Panama and this was the furthest casualty recorded that was caused by the Krakatoa explosion. The Ceylon Observer correspondent filed the following report from Galle,

...an extraordinary occurrence was witnessed at the wharf at about 1.30pm today. The sea receded as

far as the landing stage on the jetty. The boats and canoes moored along the shore were left high and dry for about three minutes. A great number of prawns and fishes were taken up by the coolies and stragglers about the place before the water returned...

There is strong historical evidence that Krakatoa exploded even more ferociously in 535AD. This event is recorded in the irregularities of tree rings from ancient pieces of timber as well as drastic climate change in the ice cores collected from the polar regions. What then was the effect if any in Ceylon?

The Great Chronicles of Ceylon do not record an earthquake, volcanic eruption or other significant singular event. However, the Rajavali, lists fourteen sovereigns who were murdered each by his successor, between AD523 and AD 648. It is also recorded that the island was ...exhausted by famine. The chronicles are silent except for noting the general state of chaos and decay during this period.

It is interesting to note that Kasyapa's brother Mogallana ruled from Anuradhapura in AD495. The next monarch of repute Kumaradas completes his reign in AD522. Sri Sanga Bo II, AD642 builds his palace in Polonnaruwa and the shift away from Anuradhapura begins.

Is it possible then that the decay of Anuradhapura was accelerated or caused by the explosion of Krakatoa in AD535? Then as now is it possible that geological events off the coast of Sumatra have determined the course of history in Ceylon?

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Growing up in a Village in the 50s and 60s

Part 3

by Siri Gamage

The Karawa and Goigama caste members referred to people of Vahumpura caste as 'hakuro' (people who made jaggery). But not many of them engaged in making jaggery at the time I grew up. Only those who lived in the Katuwana and Kirama hills were known to make jaggery and treacle for sale in the weekly markets. Vahumpura people called themselves 'deva vargaye people', (belonging to deities) and had close contacts with well-known caste leaders in Colombo and elsewhere. In Ethpitiya, several people who could climb coconut trees made treacle from juice extracted from its flower. More often than not they made toddy (Ra) for the landlords and themselves. Making Ra without a permit was illegal. I witnessed occasions when the police from Walasmulla would carry out surprise raids on suspected houses in search of toddy makers.

They also went after recreational gamblers. My grandfather was a well-known gambler in the area. He would get several people from the surrounding villages together, day or night, and start a card table. When the police arrived he would run as fast as possible and vanish into the interior only to surface after a day or so. Very rarely did he end up in the police station. But some other poor folk who could not run as fast ended up in the police station and later in the courts. There was a club attended by the well to do figures from Walasmulla town and other towns such as Katuwana and Middeniya. My grandfather would go to these places with one or more villagers as body guards. On days he won, the house was full of food and other goodies. When he lost in gambling, he would even sell my father's stock of coconuts to re-pay debts. Ups and downs in gambling characterised

my grand father's life but like my father he never drank alcohol.

In the Mulkirigala electorate where Walasmulla is located, it is well known that the Vahumpuras caste comprises the largest voting block next to the Goigamas. The political marginalisation of the Vahumpuras by the elected members of parliament from the Goigama caste including Rajapaksa families was a talking point among the villagers in the post independence period. Even today the Vahumpuras consist of 15000-20000 block votes in the seat and it is a critical factor in deciding which party or person wins the seat. There have been instances when an independent candidate from the Vahumpura caste contested the seat to exploit the frustrations of the village folk and marshaled over 10,000 votes.

When the areas beyond Middeniya such as Embilipitiya, Thunkama, Suriyaweva, Kiribanara, Moraketiya, 99 mile- post (anu namaye Kanuwa) were being opened up for settlement in the 60s and 70s, villagers from Ethpitiya and surroundings started to move into those areas. Road facilities were very poor at the time. The area was a jungle and shooting animals that would come and destroy chena cultivated (slash and burn) in corn, kurakkan, vegetables, banana etc. was a common practice. Those who returned from the jungle areas used to talk about heroic events when faced with elephants, serpents, and other wild animals. Some used to carry guns. Gem mining was also a practice followed by some villagers. Whatever the purpose of leaving the village, they used to carry essentials from Walasmulla on their trips to the jungle areas at Embilipitiya. First an elder brother or two would move and later others moved for semi or permanent settlement. Things they took from the village included coconuts, coconut leaves for thatching, cooking stuff, clothes, soap, medicine, and so on. Transport was by bullock drawn wagons. In the 70s when the transport was somewhat improved with the introduction of buses, the villagers used to

bring vegetables and other crops from Embilipitiya area to the village. My father would get his share as a courtesy as he had advanced loans to these people.

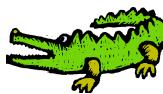
In the seventies another interesting phenomenon developed. Some women with an enterprising bent started to buy coconuts from the village folk and transport them to the weekly markets in Embilipitiya area and do a brisk trade. Their husbands would look after the children, do household chores and farming work in the village until the women returned after the trip involving about 2-3 days. Those who gathered at my father's shop used to make fun of the husbands when their wives were away. The trading skills developed by the women made them more aggressive, increased their status due to the networks developed. Due to their aggressive selling skills, the villagers were able to get a better price for their coconuts.

Ethpitiya or the surrounding villages did not have electricity, telephones or pipe borne water at the time. Villagers used to go to Kirama Oya for bathing and washing clothes. In the seventies the government funded and sank a well. But as it was too deep only the more determined men and women used to go there to draw water for bathing. Pure drinking water was in short supply. When I built a new well in the seventies behind our house hordes of villagers would come to collect drinking water from this well. Even though it was built on our private land, villagers considered it their right to come and take water without permission. This shows the community spirit and values that existed at the time when personal boundaries were secondary to community values. As the villagers started to adopt a competitive and imitative attitude several other households also built their own wells easing the pressure on our well. As time went by, when it was time to empty and clean the well, not many people wanted to lend a hand.

Kirama Oya used to get flooded from time to time. In the early days when my father took me to Oya for bathing, the wooden bridge above us at Weliamuna made weird noises every time a motor vehicle went over it. I thought it might collapse any moment.

The fear of crocodiles was very real. If we detected a floating object we would scamper to high ground for safety. A clash of wills occurred when bathing in Kirama Oya. Near the Weliamuna bridge there was a spot where the well to do Karawa family members would go for bathing and washing clothes. Another place where the Vahumpuras would go for bathing and washing was at the crossing to the paddy fields called Aluthgama. There was a protocol followed by the villagers. When someone is in the water, a new arrival would not go in upstream, as this may offend the one already in the water –whether it was a man or a woman. However on occasions where a person –young or middle aged- thought that it is an occasion to show caste superiority, he would go upstream by passing the person already bathing and start to swim or wash. Very often instances like this produced verbal exchanges between the parties. The more tolerant folk would avoid such clashes by sitting on the banks until the person or persons already in the water finish their first round and come ashore to apply soap or on completion of their ablutions. My own trick was to look for the vacant side of Oya and go for my swim or select a time when there are not many people around. This was usually around 7.00 am or 4.00pm.

Some folk started to dredge sand from Kirama Oya for a living and this practice continues to this day. Lorries and tractors would come from the towns to collect sand and the men and women who dredge the sand fill up these vehicles in no time. Objections by other villagers to this practice emerged from time to time but the poor folk who did the dredging used to overcome these objections one way or another. The parcel of land near the Oya where dredging takes place was for



sale when I last visited the area. Brick making was added to sand dredging and became an avenue of income as well as a lifestyle for some poor families in the area in the seventies. In spite of hikes in the cost of living and the price of sand and brick, the practice continues.

Many villagers used to own guns. When their license renewal became due they would carry the guns on their shoulders to the town for registration. Most of them were barrel loading types, not with bullets/cartridges and hence unreliable. One day a wild boar ambled into the village and the villagers got excited and gave chase with guns at the ready.



We, children eagerly waited to see the result of this adventure. They all came back empty handed except for their guns. None of them was able to shoot the boar. The younger folk joked about the effectiveness of the shooters.



When darkness fell on the village, there was an eerie fearful feeling, especially on rainy days. From time to time some drunken thugs from Bowala would come across to Ethpitiya and walk along the streets being boisterous. Several youth from Ethpitiya developed a skill to handle these thugs and chase them away. Sometimes the thugs would destroy a person's house and its belongings. There were instances where these incidents led to serious injuries on both sides. In addition to physical harm, burglary was another thing that created fear. When I was reading for my H.S.C. in the half completed new house that my father constructed in the mid sixties, I lost my Big Ben table clock to a thief in the dark. However, my grandfather was able to locate it and get it back for a small payment. When I lost it for the second time, I lost it forever.

...to be continued in J33

Ça ira (refrain from French Revolution song)
Things will work out

My Expulsion from Ceylon and Adventurous Escape

John Hagenbeck

Translated by Ulli Meng

There I now stood on deck of the "Insulinde", with barely any belongings, staring out into the night past the foaming wake aglow with millions of Protozoa, where the last glimmer of the lights of Colombo and the fast fading lights on the shores of my beloved island were bidding me the last farewell. And I recalled with bitter melancholy the day in the distant past, when I, a young man then, first saw the shores of Ceylon and with resolve in my heart and elaborate plans in my head, set foot on this island. What lay between then and now! There is no greater pain than remembering past fortunes in such unhappy times.

But I have never been one to let my head hang low. Pessimism may have its right to existence in philosophy - but it is not useful for work and getting ahead, least of all in overcoming adversity. Even in my terrible situation, I was – thank God – able to regain my emotional equilibrium very soon, as well as the healthy optimism, that people from Hamburg like to give expression to with the saying 'everything is only half as bad as it seems.' I trusted my lucky star, which had been shining brightly throughout my whole life up to now, and no doubt, would lead me back out of these days of doom, of this I was certain.

The ship had come from Rotterdam and its next stops were to be Padang and Sumatra, from where it was to head to its final destination, the port of Batavia. The passengers, mostly Dutch, had already been travelling for a long time and due to the lack of current news, were not clear about the worldwide political developments, the outbreak of the great European war and everything in con-

nexion to it. The tension, as one can well imagine, was great, and I was inundated with questions from all sides. By the way, I was not the only German taken aboard the 'Insulinde'. Along with me, eight of my countrymen, who happened to be in Colombo on a pleasure trip at the time, got expelled as well; furthermore, 4 Austrians, who had been members of the local community, thought it wise to leave British territory in view of things to come. So altogether, there were 13 of us Germans onboard; voluntarily we united and formed an alliance.

Animated by a confident mood, we expressed our dark humour in such a hilarious manner, thus giving rise to rumours that we were a theatre group and I, John Hagenbeck their Impresario!

By the time we had reached Padang after a pleasant voyage of 4 days, and Batavia shortly thereafter, a number of new plans for the future were already fixed in my mind. I would have to find work immediately, since the minimal "capital" I had been allowed to take, was nearly

all spent by the time I arrived in Batavia, and, of course it was impossible to have more money sent to me from Colombo at this time. Since I had become familiar with Java on previous buying trips, and had established all sorts of connections with the local colonials, I had no doubt that I would manage to find employment on some plantation or with some other enterprise rather soon.

My German travel companions were in a similar situation, their cash supply dwindling rapidly as well. All we could do was to keep a stiff upper lip and curtail our spending drastically. We started off by sharing 3 hotel rooms in Batavia among the 13 of us. Soon my companions went their own way, looking for opportunities. I too, without much delay, started my journey into the interior, where I planned to look up fellow Germans I had met



John Hagenbeck (centre) with friends in his Colombo residence

on earlier business trips, hoping to find out about employment possibilities. I found friendly hospitality, good advice and assistance, and would have found employment soon enough, had it not been for the rumours about my being a spy that had followed me. All my plans were annihilated. Because of



A ten thousand tonner is converted to a veritable "Noah's Ark". Loading zoo animals at Hamburg bound for Yokohama

ridiculous gossip, I was soon drawing unwanted attention to myself. As most colonies, Java too, is like a small village, despite its size. If something is "the matter" with a European, every Colonial from Batavia to Surabaya will know about it in a few days. Whichever I showed up, heads would turn and the whispering would start: "Ah, that's him, Hagenbeck, the spy!" It felt most unpleasant, I felt like an outcast. Even worse was the fact, that under the circumstances, none of my compatriots could dare to hire me. Their own situation was rather delicate, since Java, although neutral was more sympathetic towards our enemies and made no efforts to disguise such sentiments.

Soon things took a turn for the worst, as I could not miss the fact that secret agents, no doubt part of a large enemy spy network, were following my every move. Soon my own hunches were verified by local Germans with insight into the situation: they aimed to get hold of me any way they could to deliver me into the hands of the enemy (lit: to bring me under the enemy's control). In round-about ways the news reached me, that the

Dutch government was making efforts to get me extradited. I found myself in gravest danger in my "asylum". Even if my extradition for political misdeeds was not possible for international human rights reasons, were there not other means, by which such a goal could be achieved? Would it be so unusual to find me guilty of some common crime, to bring about extradition? To manufacture "evidence" would be child's play. I also had to consider that any time I travelled even the tiniest distance by ship, if only to a neighbouring island, I could be taken off any neutral ship. And finally, the agents and spies could always use some pretence to lure me into an ambush and abduct me - no rooster would crow after me (*literal translation*).

[From here on Ulli decided to write in third person and in her style of prose. Rather than continue to translate "mile long German sentences with tortured syntax" ..Ed]

After thinking about his situation, H decides not to wait for disaster to happen and decides to take his chances and attempts to flee, although his chances of success appear slim.

He manages to raise some funds from his old contacts and buys a passport belonging to a Dutch soldier. He then assumes his new identity and buys passage as steerage passenger on a steamer destined for Europe. But poor H is too popular and well known for his own good. Before leaving the port, the ship is inspected by local police, who recognize H, and so his plans are foiled. He gets off with a warning. Deeply troubled, he leaves for Sukabumi, a remote town where he is less well known, but the spies catch up with him there, too. He decides to plan another escape, but this time only to Sumatra, because he hopes for better luck there. He hides on a smaller ship and lands safely in a small, neutral port on the south coast of Sumatra, Emmahaven, where he encounters a German ship. The "Kleist" has taken refuge here to avoid falling into enemy hands. The ship's officers, who know both H and his companion from their days in Colombo, invite on board H and a

fellow fugitive, an Austrian from Colombo. Even now, in relative comfort and safety, the anxiety runs high. Not much news arrives from Europe, mostly enemy press. Most news comes from the Dutch Colonial press. Finally there is news about the 'Emden', a German ship that earned notoriety even among the British and Dutch, for its wily moves and heroic bravery. H's morale is thus boosted some, but inactivity and lack of work is difficult to endure.

News about the demise of the "Emden" was devastating, but on November 27, 1914, another German ship, the "Ayesha", flanked by Dutch torpedo boats, sails into port with 50 rescued sailors from the 'Emden'. There she anchors next to the German ships "Kleist", 'Rheinland', 'Choising', as well as an Austrian ship. Despite the neutrality, the small German warship has trouble getting supplies of clothing, soap, toothpaste, and other commodities because that is deemed to be support for the enemy. Because the ship is only granted 24 hours layover, the German community mobilizes to help supply the sailors. Immediately following that, H takes a risky trip to Batavia to get instructions for the captain of the "Choising". Based on those instructions, the "Choising" meets the "Ayesha" at a pre-arranged rendezvous point at sea, where the sailors from the war ship can be transferred to the merchant ship. The "Ayesha" is subsequently sunk.

Upon his return, H unexpectedly meets up with his wife, who has been released from Colombo. They both find continued refuge and hospitality onboard the "Kleist" until

New Year's day 1915. Then they move to Padang, where they enjoy the hospitality of friends. The rumour mill keeps grinding, and again H notices that he is being watched and finds out that there is a price on his head. But then, the most absurd rumour, started by a French journalist, has begun to circulate, i.e. that H. has been 'fried and eaten' by some natives of Papua, while on an expedition there.

Despite the rumoured death, H. feels more and more unsafe and starts thinking about fleeing again. This time he buys the identity of a Belgian (Flemish) Colonial soldier. There is a slight resemblance

and he does his best to alter his appearance and clothes completely to match his new identity. He buys passage on a neutral ship. In the dark of night, disguised as the Belgian soldier, drenched from a tropical downpour,

he arrives onboard, disappearing into his quarters quickly, finding it difficult to adjust to the primitive bunks, to be shared with 5 British coal trimmers (literal translation). He is used to travelling in luxurious first class cabins. He also has to answer lots of questions from his new room mates, making it more challenging to

remain in character at all times and not give himself away. Luckily, he gets away for work-duty here and there. Because of the cheap price for his ticket, he has to give a certain amount of labour, which allows him to get away from his bunk mates who use every opportunity to vilify the Germans, making it hard for him to stay in character. More trouble - the passports of everyone are inspected, and H fears, that his altered document will



"Emden" sinking in the background, some of the survivors later rescued by "Ayesha"



"Ayesha" a small schooner played an important role in rescue, and was itself sunk on 16th December 1914

not stand up to scrutiny, so he feigns outrage, and luckily gets waved through. When they reach Sabang, they anchor next to several German merchant ships that are waiting out the war there. H knows some of the officers and just to test out the effectiveness of his disguise addresses one officer who knew him before, in French. The disguise works; he is not recognized by the acquaintance. He is optimistic now, anticipating getting to Suez next. However, there are technical problems and for a time it looks as if his escape will again be foiled. There is talk that they have to head for Colombo to fix the problem. This would mean, someone will recognize him there with certainty. But luck prevails; the problem gets fixed without the necessity of having to stop in Colombo. H can barely cope with the stress and conditions on board and succumbs to Malaria for a few days. Another close call, as the British board the ship once more to look for German refugees.

Three more times, H is lucky and gets waved through as the ‘poor Belgian’. Finally the ship reaches Suez, where more inspections take place. Then Port Said, where he even gets to go ashore. The last inspection takes place in the Mediterranean, where the French board the ship.

Again, he slips through their fingers. Finally they arrive in Naples, where H leaves the ship under the pretence of wanting to visit his brother in the French part of Switzerland. At this time, Italy and Germany are not at war yet and H has no problem reaching the German consulate, where he receives a passport to return home. And he concludes: “thus I traveled by train without further incident to Germany, my homeland... I was free—and behind me in the far distance lay my broken dream, **Ceylon, my tropical paradise!**”

...concluded

*Adam
Had 'em*

A very short poem on the antiquity of microbes

TAVALAMS

One Time Ships of the Lankan Forests

by Vama Vamadevan

Tavalams were the counterpart of the camel caravans of the Middle East in the Sri Lankan forests. In the early days before roads were built the Muslim traders used tavalams to traverse the inaccessible parts of the island for trade. Tavalams are a pack of bullocks, usually numbering between 20 and 30, used as beasts of burden. Bags of goods are panniered by throwing them across the backs of the bullocks. The vastly unopened parts of the hill country at that time were inaccessible for hauling goods because of lack of roads, and these pack-oxen called tavalams were ideal in the circumstances.

After the colonial powers gained control of the Maritime Province, the Kandyan Kings started depending more and more on the Muslims for transport of their requirements to the interior. There was a demand for foodstuffs, salt and wearing apparel in the interior regions, which had to be transported from the ports such as Puttalam to Kandy. Similarly, the spices and other products of the interior had to be transported to the ports to be shipped to the Arab countries. This required a good system of communications since the transport of the goods was the vital problem in those times. The Moors were equal to the task; introducing and perfecting the transport of goods by means of pack bulls, a system which has ever since come to be known as ‘tavalams’. A number of tavalam bulls going in groups, formed a caravan, traversing distant tracts.

Just as their ancestors transported their merchandise overland by camel caravan in the middle -east, the local Moor in those days of difficult communications conveyed their salt from the coast to the Sinhalese capital and other interior towns by means of ‘tavalams’.

The Muslims who settled in the coastal towns

traveled with their 'tavalams' throughout the length and breadth of the Kandyan Kingdom bringing their wares for barter. A normal 'Tavalam' journey took several days to reach its destination. Therefore, there was a need for resting-places for the night. As a result small Muslim settlements sprang up. Many of the Muslim villages in the Kandyan areas owe their origin to this process.

The Sinhalese kings had separate departments for transport called 'Madige' in Sinhalese. This department consisted chiefly of Muslims who transported the King's grain, brought salt from the coast and carried on trade on behalf of the King. It is not un-common therefore to find names of villages either with the suffix or prefix of 'Madige' around the old capitals of Ceylon like Sitawake, Kurunagalle, Gampola and Kandy. In the state-craft of the Kandyan Kingdom, states Ralph Peiris they were attached to the Madige, or Bullock cart Department.

Dr. W. Balendra who did anthropological surveys with the late de la Marrett states:

"Long before the road and the railway and the Bullock cart, it was the Mohammedans who introduced the system of tavalams. Tavalams are pack bulls. They carry goods packed on it and move in herds over rough terrain where no roads exist. They can pull along a mere footpath, up on hills and down towards valleys. They used to transport goods for long distances and showed the natives of the place how goods could be trans-ported to long distances with the help of animals."

Dr. Balendra, goes on to say:

"Therefore you will find how the Islamic culture also started the tavalams, their method of transport and this was the precursor of the Bullock Cart, which the Dutch introduced. They introduced on the same lines as the Mohammedans did. The Arabs with their wide experience with

camels and deserts could have easily adopted the idea with bulls as the beasts of burden."

Names of villages like Tawalanthenne also owe their origin to Tavalams introduced by the Muslims.

From the "inner and outer Madiges" or Bullock cart departments in the contemporary Lankatilaka inscription it would appear that many of the Arab descendants of mixed race and their converts, now known as Moors, had settled down as subjects of the Sinhalese Kings.



Pack bulls on a hilly track

Itinerant trading required the maintenance of pack animals. Bullocks were the favorite pack animals, though the use of elephants was not unknown. Muslims kept teams of pack-bullocks. According to the Portuguese 'tombo', for example, twelve Moors from Panagamura in Madure Korale kept 65 pack-bullocks. From information gathered by John

D'oyley in the Kandyan Kingdom of the early years of the 19th century, it is clear that the Moors of Hindagala also kept pack-bullocks. Moors who kept pack animals were called upon to perform the 'Madige Rajakariya', that is the transport of produce largely areca and grain on behalf of the King.

The Muslim tavalams were also used, at times and in some places for the transport of requirements to temples and Devales. This speaks highly of Muslim tolerance for other religions. It would not be wrong to say that the demographic spread of the Muslims was not by the sword but more by the Tavalam.

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Remembering the Depression and More

by *Decima Perera*

I will be 86 years old shortly. The childhood traumas of the Depression years – 1928 or so to mid-thirties – still haunt my dreams in the way it affected my father and therefore me. Let me go back a bit further in time to get this account into perspective.

I found the story of my ancestry, (very likely) in a little book written in Singhalese, compiled by T. S Dharmabandu of Egoda Uyana. There is a notable Buddhist temple in this village where probably records about the clans of the Karawe caste to which I belong, survived the pillage by invading Portuguese.

My father Wannaku Wattē Wadugē Don Andrew Fernando was born in 1875. The story mentions a Wannaku Rala, son of Willegoda Wickremasinghe, whose family had been living in Gampola from the reign of Buwenekha Bahu V(1371-1408), whose Capital it was at that time. Wannaku Rala was appointed by King Parakrama Bahu IX in 1528 as Pay Master (?) to the army and in charge of the district from Galkissa (presently Mount Lavinia) to Panadura, called Korale Wella (presently Koralawella). He was allocated a residence in Moratuwa.

My father inherited land in Rawatawatte, Moratuwa, opposite Prince and Princess of Wales Colleges and his sister's children still live there. So, I concluded, there must be some truth in the story, especially when it goes on to relate that my grandfather was one of the signatories to a deed in 1915, sacrificing their land to the British Government for the cemetery of Holy Emmanuel Church, where he is buried now. Grandfather's brother owned land in Koralawella and his children inherited that.

Wannaku Wattē Wadugē translates as "Carpenter's house on Wannaku's land". As the story unfolds, in his spare time Wannaku Rala had indulged in his hobby of carpentry and fashioned a Throne, which he presented to King Bhuwanekhe Bahu V of Kotte, capital by then. He was rewarded with paddy fields known as Thunriyawella, Erawella. This explains the Wadugē part. Moratuwa has since become famous for its clever carpenters.

Wannaku Rala had four sons. When the Portuguese landed and occupied the coastal areas and pillaged Kotte, he was domiciled in Moratuwa lost his job and was at the mercy of the Portuguese. Probably in order to survive, he converted to Catholicism and had his four sons baptised. Three of them had taken the name of their sponsor Don Fernando and the fourth, of his sponsor, Don Perera. This part of the story was proved when my father's sister's daughter married a Wannku Wattē Wadugē Don Perera. What needs researching is whether the Throne presented to King Bhuwanaka Bahu is the one in the Colombo Museum or whether it perished in the pillage.

My father attended Prince of Wales College. By that time the family had changed religion again and were now Anglican, introduced by the British, who supported the already rich de Soysa family, to establish Prince & Princess of Wales Colleges, Holy Emmanuel Church and Princess Louise Hospital in Moratuwa. My grandmother had died and grandfather entered into a third marriage.

Father's destiny was not to become a professional like his first cousin, Dr. Algernon Fernando (A.C.A). He dropped out of school early and was apprenticed to a plum-bago mine owner. Evidently, he did not drop out of school early because he was stupid, only that his kind of intelligence could not cope with Shakespeare and Pythagoras. He soon learned the ropes and bought his own mine in Mirigama. When money

started rolling in with the outbreak of World War I, he went on to acquire a small rubber estate called Ella Group in the Ratnapura district and dabbled in gem mining too.

He had already invested in a property in Jawatte Lane, Colombo where he started his export business, then went on to acquire a larger one in Panchikawatte with a commodious house, closer to the Port. He married only after he was well established, though not up to the standard of the de Soysa's, who also had connections with Moratuwa. His only extravagance was a splashy wedding, acquiring what today would be called a valuable "old crock" and decking his bride with valuable jewellery. Life was good when I came into the world in 1919 just after WWI ended. The euphoria did not anticipate the bursting of the bubble. I was born into the same Leo star sign (lagna) as my father and strangely, also our factotum, Carolis, a protégé of my maternal grandmother. My father's "lucky" period brought him wealth; Carolis drew an "also ran" horse in the Galle Gymkhana Sweep, which, on the advice of my father, he sold to Mr. Ephraums, the racing enthusiast of Galle, who came to buy it and Carolis was all the richer for it. So, it seemed, I had some luck coming too! An erudite Buddhist monk was our neighbour and had cast our horoscopes. When the Depression was looming, he told my father that he was fast approaching his bad period and he may die or lose his wealth.

He was not a gambler – never the Racecourse, Bridge or Poker! He smoked with restraint and drank cautiously, as he had no head for alcohol, nor indulged in vainglorious display like some of his bachelor-day buddies who came to grief in the crash. It was rumoured that one of them committed suicide. So the toll of the Depression was not due to his profligacy.

Luckily for me, in his days of affluence he sent us children to St. Bridget's, probably on

the advice of his friends, among them some of the famous de Silva "Henley House" boys whose father had owned the St. Bridget's property. We started going to school in a buggy drawn by a bull, Moratuwa style. When my younger sister was to start school, though the income was declining, my mother, most unwisely, persuaded my father to buy a new Chrysler car being aggressively advertised at the time by the American company in order to clear their accumulating stocks. Her jobless brother got the sales commission. The car needed an expensive chauffeur, as my father never learned to drive. We children felt special, as not many cars brought children even to St. Bridget's. We lived in a comfortable, well-furnished house with an attached toilet and bathroom, somewhat uncommon in those days and in the same premises as my father's office, which had a telephone. There were also the sheds needed for the preparation of the plumbago and rubber for export, which meant a work force, including a carpenter, a cooper and office staff. Two ayahs, a cook woman, houseboy, Carolis and a gardener, who also drove the buggy and looked after the cows, a big garden with many fruit trees, a few coconut trees and a thambili tree, made life quite pleasant for us.

Then I experienced my first scary incident - the harbinger of what was to be. One night as we were about to sit down to dinner, a blinding flash of lightning was followed by an almighty, deafening crash, as the thunder bolt whizzed past the long line of glass paned windows in the dining room, followed by the simultaneous shattering of the large mirror on my mother's three-section wardrobe. Two coconut trees were set ablaze and a whiff of sulphur pervaded. I was five years old. That mirror was not replaced till I was eighteen. Those windows only had roller blinds to keep out the morning sun, as they overlooked a vast expanse of marsh with patches of water here and there amidst the sweet-smelling, long stemmed, cattle fodder grass, some of

which marsh my father owned and had filled up. Adam's Peak could be seen in the far distance on a clear day, a pleasant vista to look out on.

Father was beginning to look anxious. May be he was mortgaging his properties to Chettiar and other unscrupulous money-lenders at very high interest rates in order to keep things going. Dismissing a labour force meant they would starve, as there was no dole. My youngest sister was born in November, 1929 and in May 1930 a flash flood caused by the breaching of the bund protecting the city from the vagaries of the Kelani River, inundated our house at dead of night. We children, with my mother, were evacuated to uncle Algie's home, then in Dickman's Road, Colombo. He was the Port Surgeon at the time. From there we went to my aunt's home in Moratuwa and could not get back home for over a month. That traumatic experience at age ten is related in my book.

Father had worked like a Trojan with the help of faithful Carolis, who never left us in spite of his windfall, which was invested in a property at Kalutara for his family. Some of father's employees occupying tenements in his Jawatte property gave ungrudging assistance too to clean up and guard from looters. There was no insurance and his credit-worthiness was exhausted, so he had borrowed money from his doctor cousin on the security of some of my mother's valuable jewellery. This transaction eventually led to a breach in the relationship when the cousin demanded interest at the Chettiar's rates.

...to be concluded in J 33

A Committee is a group of the
unwilling,
chosen from the
unfit,
to do the
unnecessary

Anon

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Book Review

Sri Lanka's English Literature: a literary, cultural and social history : Goonetilleke, D.C.R.A., 2005. Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People 1917-2003. Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 318 pp., ISBN 955-8095-90-7 (hard cover for export). Rs.750.00 US\$ 7.99, postage extra. Paperback Rs.599.00. Available online www.vijithayapa.com or www.srilankanbooks.com Email: rybooks@sri.lanka.net



It was only after Sri Lanka gained Independence from Britain in 1948 that literature of significance in English was written and there evolved a sufficient mass of this literature to form a field in itself. But Sri Lankan literature originated much earlier than 1948, really in 1917 with the first novel in English. The literature in English before Independence is not very rewarding in literary-critical terms, but it is necessary to acquire some notion of it for a full understanding of the literature after Independence and of the tradition out of which it evolved. This book by D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke takes into account the literature before Independence and focuses centrally on the period after Independence. It, thereby, provides a complete understanding of the field. Literature is considered here in its widest sense as it appears in newspapers and journals as well as in books.

This book is, in fact, the first comprehensive study of its subject by its internationally acknowledged authority, D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, who has done much to familiarize the world with Sri Lankan writing. Goonetilleke is also the author of landmark studies of colonial literature, Joseph Conrad and Salman Rushdie, and is a well-established and recognized critic of twentieth century and postcolonial literature.

The book opens with an introduction which provides the world context for Sri Lankan literature, focusing on the expansion of the literary canon in recent times with the accommodation of new interests, postcolonial, black, feminist, cultural and contemporary (not without controversy or struggle). Goonetilleke then proceeds to present an overall picture of the evolution of Sri Lankan English Literature, explaining its emergence in terms of social (especially the populist/nationalist revolution of 1956) and literary forces; considering the central problem faced by writers of reconciling their own sensibility, indigenous traditions and realities, on the one hand, and Western literary and other traditions, on the other; adumbrating the diverse responses of creative writers to the English language and the tendency of writers and critics to make the language of literature an issue; concluding at the present stage when this issue has ceased to be an issue. In the course of his discussion, Goonetilleke refers to Lakdasa Wikremasingha's view: "I have come to realize that I am using the language of the most despicable and loathsome people on earth: ...To write in English is a form of cultural treason", and then to Yasmine Gooneratne's diametrically opposed view of the Eng-

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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

Collections & Recollections by Decima Perera : Commodore Press VIC, 310pp . Price \$ 20 + \$ 6 P&H Call Decima on 03 9870 0079

Navigating Boundaries: The Asian Diaspora in Torres Strait, Editors A Shnukal, G Ramsay & Y Nagata. Contains chapter entitled ***The Sri Lankan Settlers of Thursday Island*** co-authored by Stanley Sparkes & Dr Anna Shnukal. Pandanus Books, available from Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University Canberra. Paperback 330 pp. Price A\$ 55 inclusive of P&H.

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lish language:

"now the distorting old connection's done
fit her to be your Mistress, and my Muse",
before arriving at his own conclusion.

Goonetilleke, then, examines how important specific events such as the Insurgency of 1971, the ethnic conflict and nationalism have been recorded in the literature. The uprising of 1971 was confined mainly to the rural Sinhalese youth, but it appeared on a scale hitherto unprecedented in Sri Lanka's modern history. Goonetilleke refers to Bryan de Kretser's accurate response in 'If you have tears':

"Moan, O people of the land
We have lost a late innocence."

The ethnic crisis, with its international ramifications, has currently assumed far more menacing proportions, though held in check at present by a fragile truce. Goonetilleke quotes Jean Arasanayagam's poem on the subject, 'A Country at War':

"This time the explosions did not go off

(Continued on page 25)

SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS

Sydney 14th August 2005

The President introduced Mr. Sunil de Silva, currently a Senior Prosecutor with the NSW Department of Public Prosecutions, as a former Attorney General of Sri Lanka, an actor of note and a man who has rendered sterling service to his countrymen in Australia. Mr. de Silva said his presentation was titled "Legal Lunu Miris" because the names of many of the lawyers he intended referring to would be familiar to the audience and he

intended to add spice to his recollections by personalising those luminaries in the light of his own experience. Before launching into any reminiscence he felt it necessary to put before his audience some brief facts about the Courts in Sri Lanka where the administration of justice evolved from early British colonial times when civil servants presided over the courts, to a judiciary that was separate from and independent of the Executive. He gave us a succinct, clear exposition of the manner in which the system changed after 1963, when he was admitted as an Advocate of the Supreme Court, with the abolition of appeals to the Privy Council in 1971 and the introduction of the 1972 Constitution which provided that the Judges of the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court were appointed by the President of the Republic. Other changes followed and Mr. de Silva dwelt briefly on one unintended consequence when Mrs. Vivienne Gunawardene was arrested while conducting a demonstration in front of the American Embassy re the establishment of a U.S. nuclear base at Diego Garcia. The very famous Dr. Colvin R. de Silva appeared for Mrs Gunawardene, and Mr. Sunil de Silva for one of two other respondents. Dr. Colvin de Silva found a technical flaw in the arrest and exploited it brilliantly so that the panel of three judges held the arrest was illegal though there were extenuating circumstances. Both Mrs. Gunawardene and the arresting inspector won their cases but an inspector Ganeshanathan who was not a party, but had questioned the protestors, lost. However, the last named was promoted, the State paid the award made against him and he appealed to the Supreme Court as he had not been charged nor heard in defence.

Shortly afterwards the Supreme Court heard the case of Vishwalingam vs Liyanage, during which Justice Wanasinghe realised oaths taken under the sixth amendment to the Constitution, were "in default" so all judges had in effect lost their appointments. This was rectified but left some legal issues unresolved.

Mr. de Silva went on to regale his appreciative audience with a selection of amusing anecdotes involving his legal colleagues of the 1963- 1992 period. One such concerned his friend, Daya Perera then known as a P.C. (Presidents Counsel) rather than the appellation Queens Counsel from earlier decades. Mr. Perera, seeking to



Sunil de Silva

shake the evidence of a sub-inspector, asked him when he was so appointed, to which came the reply, "the same day you were appointed a P.C" (which can stand for Police Constable).

Space does not allow of reproducing many more tales from the bar but in conclusion we include the lawyer, cross examining a doctor who held death was caused by shrapnel in a case where a hand bomb was thrown, and thereafter seeking the discharge of his client because he was named Sarnelis, not shrapnel! A lively question and answer session followed in which Mr. de Silva gave us a brief opinion on the functioning of the Australian courts by comparison with those he knew in Sri Lanka.

Tony Peries

Melbourne, 11th September 2005

The Chairman, Dr Srilal Fernando introduced the speaker, Shyamon Jayasinghe whose subject was "Ediriweera Sarachchandra in my time." Shyamon, a prominent actor on the Sinhala stage, was the first Pothe Gura or Narrator in Dr Sarachchandra's landmark drama "Maname" which emerged in 1956, a year that ushered in a period of national resurgence. The play was received with great acclaim as a seminal work which invested its erudite author with the honour of being the creator of the modern Sinhala theatre. Shyamon, a Peradeniya University product of Dr



Dr Sarachchandra with, Shyamon Jayasinghe on the right

Sarachchandra's most creative period, like most of Sri Lanka's actors also had a parallel career in another sphere, in his case that of the Administrative Service from which he retired in

1994.

Shyamon, who spoke very informally, enjoyed a close association with his guru and began his talk by informing the audience that it coincided with the tenth anniversary of Dr Sarachchandra's death which had fallen a few days previously. His emphasis right throughout was on his personal knowledge and observations of the man, illustrated with anecdotes, as Dr Sarachchandra's stature as a dramatist, poet, novelist, philosopher, university teacher, man of letters and public intellectual have been well documented and celebrated in many essays, speeches, commentar-

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 23)

for the nonce things still stand intact
but it's only a matter of time, the foundation's
wired perhaps tomorrow the edifice comes
down."

Both rebellions have shaken Sri Lankan English writers out of their limiting class affiliations and resulted in unusual creative work. The titles of the chapters are a clue to the argument: 'The 1971 Insurgency: The Perils of Idealism' and 'The "Ethnic" Conflict: Fact and Fiction'. Indeed, this book always views Sri Lankan English literature in the context of the history of the Sri Lankan people. It, thereby, provides not only a literary history but also a cultural and social history of the modern age. Goonetilleke proceeds to provide separate chapters on all the genres of Sri Lankan English literature: 'Drama: Migration and Metamorphosis', 'Poetry: Getting beyond the Colonial Heritage', 'Fiction: Alienation and Identity', 'Short Fiction: Realism and Modernity'. These are full and sensitive accounts of all the genres from their beginnings to the present, studded with probing analyses of plays, poems, novels and short stories to illustrate the tendencies of the genres and/or qualities of individual writers. He includes a special chapter on Women's Discourse which goes beyond Sri Lanka; the wider scope is meant to enhance a topic of current importance. He goes back to the Buddha and early Sri Lankan history to suggest ideas and realities which feminists, fed on a Western diet, should take into account. The concluding chapter is a sober overall assessment of Sri Lankan English literature, highlighting the growth achieved in a comparatively short period with a comparatively small pool of talent, noting that this literature too now participates in what Patrick Fernando called "the organized internationalization of English as a creative medium".

Goonetilleke's inquiry is informative and acute. It is rich reading for the general reader who wishes to get acquainted with the English literary scene in Sri Lanka as well as for those who take a specialized interest in the subject.

Lakshmi de Silva

True stories of Idiots!! # 1

A motorist was unknowingly caught in an automated speed trap that measured his speed using radar and photographed his car. He later received in the mail a ticket for \$40 and a photo of his car. Instead of payment, he sent the police department a photograph of \$40. Several days later, he received a letter from the police that contained another picture, this time of handcuffs.

He immediately mailed in his \$40.

(Continued from page 24)

ies and books by his contemporaries and others.

In physical terms, the speaker described him as slightly built and having a modest frame. What was striking was that this relatively prosaic looking man had within him a formidable creative force which was continually searching for spiritual and psychological truths as to the nature of being. He was totally absorbed in this search and was indifferent to his external life which remained at a basic level in keeping with the tradition of the Taxila gurus, eschewing material possessions – except perhaps for his love of beer which he often enjoyed with friends at the University Faculty Club in Peradeniya!

Sarachchandra had a mind that explored and probed the higher levels of human experience and he possessed a passion that almost totally narrowed the focus of his efforts to reaching his complex goal. The process of such overwhelming self-absorption led to certain tragic propensities, neglect of his personal material well-being and above all the neglect of his family. He had two marriages and children from both. His personal life was fraught with tensions and tragedies which found expression in his book *Pin Ethi Sarasavi* which tells the story of his life. In it he wrote: "The raw materials for literary work are such tensions, conflicts, separation from loved ones and tragedies." Sarachchandra, like many other artistically gifted men and women, lived the paradox that suffering is a fertile source of creative art. He confirmed that "my creative work sprang up in times when I faced deep conflict and unhappiness in life."

Until he met his second wife Lalitha (when he was in his mid-fifties) who was twenty-five years younger, he did not reap any material reward from his artistic efforts although others certainly benefited in this way. He had produced his greatest works by then, the dramas "Maname" and "Sinhabahu", his novels and works on literary criticism, the latter introducing this particular genre to the Sinhala reader. Lalitha, with her considerable business acumen, changed all this. She saw to it that his plays did not fade from public view by organizing regular performances which travelled the length and breadth of the island. Even Jaffna after 1983 welcomed a performance of "Maname", the audience responding enthusiastically by garlanding the actors. She also saw to it that he received better terms for the re-publication of his books.

In a compelling overview of Dr Sarachchandra's life and achievements, the speaker gave interesting insights into his boyhood and student days. This was still in the colonial period when the Sinhala language was ignored and slighted. At all the schools he attended and especially at St Thomas' College and St Aloysius', Galle, the Sinhala period was regarded as a time for play and making fun. At St Aloysius' the Sinhala

(Continued on page 29)

A “veray parfit gentil knight”?

Some glimpses of the enigmatic
Sir Herbert Dowbiggin, I.G.P. Ceylon

by Joe Simpson

The Englishman (Sir) Herbert Dowbiggin (1880 – 1966) served in the Ceylon Police from 1901 until his retirement in 1937, when he returned to Great Britain. Most of his career was spent in Colombo, where he became a long-serving Inspector General of Police (I.G.P.) at a very early age. Educated at the Merchant Taylors School in London, he was a junior teacher at Trinity College, Kandy before he joined the police. In 1927 he was made a C.M.G., and among other honours he held the King's Police Medal, the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, and the Crown of Belgium. During the course of his remarkable police career in Ceylon, which spanned the era from the decade before the Great War of 1914-18 until the very eve of the next global conflict of 1939-45, Sir Herbert became a hero to some, an officer of the peace who embodied the qualities of a mediaeval “veray parfit gentil knight”, while to some others - in the wake of the events of 1915 - he appeared as the blood-stained villain of the piece.

Leonard Woolf mentions Herbert Dowbiggin in *Growing*, his memoir of his Ceylon Civil Service career between 1905 and 1911. When the lowly Cadet Woolf and his pet terrier Charles first arrived in Jaffna in early January 1905, they were met by Wilfrid Thomas (“Tom”) Southorn (Leonard’s future brother-in-law who went on to become Governor of Gambia some thirty years later), Herbert Dowbiggin, then the Police Superintendent in Jaffna, and Dowbiggin’s

assistant Jimmy Bowes. The four of them headed off into the old Fort, where Woolf was to share a bungalow with Southorn, then a lowly Office Assistant (O.A.). Dowbiggin and Bowes also had their bungalows inside the Fort, opposite the prison. Charles the dog promptly chased and killed a stray cat, then a poisonous snake, thereby gaining Woolf instant respect among the tiny European community in town. Woolf remembered Herbert Dowbiggin as being “not at all meek and mild, either in word or deed”. Dowbiggin was a bad bridge player, but had “bullied” the other bad players into allowing him to dominate the Jaffna bridge table.

Woolf, a far better bridge player, trounced Dowbiggin at their first foursome, thereby bringing this particular dictatorship to an abrupt end. At first Dowbiggin took it rather badly, turning red in the face and “violently” challenging Woolf’s claim to his revoke. Woolf charitably adds that he later got to like Dowbiggin very much.

During his time in Jaffna, Woolf regularly met up with Dowbiggin, Bowes, Southorn and a small clique

of fellow-Europeans for tennis followed by “platitudes, chaff or gossip” over whiskies and soda. In his memoir he recalls the “humdrum melancholy and monotony” of this social ritual, British exercise followed by British conversation, and what he calls “the strange quality of our imperialist isolation”. (No “natives” could then join the exclusively “white” tennis club). In his private letters from that time, Woolf was less charitable towards Dowbiggin: one letter to his Cambridge friend Lytton Strachey, written only a few days after his arrival in the North, describes the youthful Police Superintendent as “strange and rather gruff”, obsessed with his work, and subject to the same “black melancholia” affecting most of his fellow-imperialists in Jaffna.



Sir Herbert Dowbiggin
1880-1966

H.C.R. Anthonisz, in a short chapter from his privately-printed reminiscences under the title *Ramblings of an Old Stager*, presents a more positive image of Herbert Dowbiggin, whom he remembered from around 1901 as a novice policeman at the Colombo Pettah Police Station, just before his posting to Jaffna. The piece was written on the eve of Dowbiggin's 1937 retirement from the Force. Anthonisz recalled a "clean cut, slim youngster" who was seated in the Reserve Sergeant's chair, immersed in the Information Book – a jumble of badly-written complaints by barely literate Sergeants of the day. Even then, Anthonisz could see that young Dowbiggin would go far. He comments on his "life full of energy; broad vision; intense hard work, and his unfailing sympathy with all his men and others, paying constant visits to Hospital, whenever a man of his happened to be there, cheering him up and giving him a fresh desire for life". In other words, whatever his other shortcomings may have been, he was a born leader of policemen.

With such talents, Dowbiggin quickly rose in the ranks, and (so Anthonisz tells us) returned to Colombo after his brief posting in Jaffna, where he quickly licked his Policemen into shape at the Pettah Station, transforming a body of men who had long been figures of fun ("Boobies" more than "Bobbies", he quips) into "well set men of manly bearing and having some respect for themselves". His rise to the top, as I.G.P., was meteoric. Among the achievements mentioned by Anthonisz, who once served as his Office Assistant, was starting a night school for Sergeants and Policemen in the Pettah, the first-ever attempt to educate the men. Many years later the Police School was created in Havelock Town, on Bam-balapitiya acreage secured by Dowbiggin in 1913, when he was already I.G.P. (Dowbiggin was a keen promoter of sports, becoming the first President of the Colombo Football League when it was re-constituted in 1920; his successor in 1924

was Sir John Tarbat, Head of Finlay's). Anthonisz remembered Dowbiggin's grief when a promising young police clerk committed suicide: "Sir Herbert was always sympathetic and was always cut to the heart at any untoward happening....He always reminds me of a gentle knight of old, who can, when the occasion demands it, be very stern indeed."

Dr. Drummond Shiels, a member of the Donoughmore Commission that visited Ceylon in 1927, in his subsequent role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies in the first Labour Government of Ramsay MacDonald, described Sir Herbert Dowbiggin as "one of the ablest police-officers in the overseas service of the British Empire". The occasion was the 20th Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, held in Geneva in June 1931. Among the topics for discussion was the Palestine Mandate, where the British had faced terrible riots in 1929. In January 1930, they sent Dowbiggin from Ceylon to Palestine to advise on the re-organization of the Palestine Police, and his report was ready by May of that same year. Responding to a Commission member's request that this report be communicated to them, Dr. Drummond Shiels replied unhelpfully that Dowbiggin's report had not been published, since it was "a very confidential document which it was considered hardly possible to publish".

Early on in his career as I.G.P., Herbert Dowbiggin revealed the "very stern" aspect of his character, the Janus Face of the Chaucerian "veray parfit gentil knight". The occasion was the 1915 communal riots in Ceylon, and their immediate aftermath of harsh repression by the British during the notorious Martial Law period. Dowbiggin took a hard line against the Buddhist reform movement, singling out in particular the leading Buddhist schools (like Mahinda College, Galle under Principal Frank Woodward) which he described in his confidential report to the Governor, Lord Chalmers, as an

“unwholesome influence” that did not “appear to encourage affection towards the British Empire”, and promoted “politics of a vicious type”. (From a modern perspective, as Michael Powell states in his biography of Woodward, *Manual of a Mystic*, these “vicious politics” amounted to a very mild form of nascent nationalism mingled with an odd regard for Empire, evidently not enough to mollify an arch-imperialist like Dowbiggin). Certainly this attitude resulted in police and army excesses against innocent Sinhalese Buddhists during 1915, which many islanders could neither forget nor forgive. In Shyam Selvadurai’s 1998 novel *Cinnamon Gardens*, set in Ceylon of the late 1920s, we briefly encounter the fictional bullying “Inspector General of Police, an Englishman notorious for his cruelty”, who is hot on the trail of labour unrest activists.

In real life, Sir Herbert’s allegedly sinister role in the repressions of 1915 came back to haunt him in January 1937, when the left-wing LSSP organized a public demonstration on the Galle Face Green to “celebrate” his pending retirement and departure from Ceylon. Leading politicians like George E. de Silva and A.E. Goonesinghe addressed a crowd of some ten thousand in the rain, and the visiting young Communist firebrand Mark Bracegirdle decried such police excesses as “putting harmless villagers out of their beds at night and shooting them down long after the 1915 riots had been quelled”. A contemptuous resolution was passed by acclamation that read:

“The people of Ceylon in public meeting assembled condemns the blood-stained record of Sir Herbert Dowbiggin as I.G.P. of Ceylon and marks its sympathy with the victims of police brutality and terrorism of 1915; and condemns in unmistakable terms the betrayal of the Ceylonese nation by Sir Baron Jayatilaka and other lackeys of British imperialism in attempting to identify the nation with an appreciation of Sir Dowbiggin’s [sic] services.”

A very different perspective than that of H.C.R. Anthonisz, quoted at the beginning of this essay – which simply goes to show yet again the truth of the old axiom, that one man’s meat is another man’s poison! It was not the first time that Dowbiggin had come under attack – in 1907, when Superintendent of Police for the Western Province, he was physically assaulted and his orderly’s bicycle destroyed during disturbances following the suicide (which some believed wrongly to have been a police murder by poison) of John Kotewala Snr., father of a future Prime Minister of Ceylon, while on trial for homicide. Police Superintendent Dowbiggin had headed the police party that arrested the elder Kotewala immediately upon his return from Japan on the morning of January 24, 1907; Dowbiggin was also in charge of the investigations that led to Kotewala and two others being charged with the *cause célèbre* murder of Francis Dixon Attygalle, Kotewala’s wife’s brother.

By way of an interesting footnote to this little essay, in the first volume of the Sri Lankan historian K.M. de Silva’s biography of J.R. Jayawardene the author reveals that one of the future President’s earliest political acts that took place in 1929 while he was a Colombo law student, was to prepare an uncharacteristically polemical article for the Law College Journal on the 1915 riots, that passionately indicted the British colonial administration (including no doubt I.G.P. Herbert Dowbiggin) for its repressions that year. The polemic never saw the light of day, for the printer of the Law Journal was none other than the “Daily News”, then owned by J.R.’s maternal uncle, Ceylon press baron D.R. Wijewardene. Under irresistible pressure from both his powerful uncle and his father, Supreme Court Justice E.W. Jayawardene, young J.R. reluctantly withdrew his article. Fortunately for posterity, to this day the typescript, entitled “The Ceylon Riots – 1915”, remains filed carefully away in the J.R. Jayawardene MSS, Presidential Archives, file 176.

For many Ceylon Police officers visiting the U.K. on work or training courses, a visit to Sir Herbert Layard Dowbiggin, C.M.G. at his retirement home was a “must” – something in the nature of a mandatory pilgrimage. According to lore, any time he was expecting a visit from one of these officers, he would make sure he was out mowing his lawn or clipping his hedge when the visitor arrived. True to his tradition, each visitor would feel obliged to say, “Sir, I will do that for you.” In that way, the wily old Inspector General would get his gardening done for him. Good leadership involves delegation, after all!

(Continued from page 25)

teacher was the well-known historian Father S. G. Perera. A scholar in oriental languages as well, he was treated as a joke in the class. At St Thomas' the young Sarachchandra made efforts to point out the value of the oriental tradition and greatness of people such as Rabindranath Tagore, the famous Bengali poet. He was promptly nicknamed ‘Tagore’. He little knew that one day in the future he would go to Tagore’s centre of learning at Shantiniketan and study Indian philosophy and music and meet Tagore himself.

The University College, as it was then called was affiliated to the University of London and again permeated with colonial influences. Sarachchandra got special permission to offer Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit at the Intermediate. He studied these subjects mainly by himself and with the help of Buddhist monks. He associated with Rambukwelle Siddhartha, a Sanskrit scholar and grew knowledgeable about Vannam and Kandyan dance forms too.

After graduation, he started wearing the Gandhi cap and dhoti for this was the period when India began its struggle for *swaraj* or self-rule and nationalists in Sri Lanka became inspired by the Indian example. The most sought after jobs in the island by clever young men were those in the colonial Civil Service. Sarachchandra did well in his written exams but his oriental attire was frowned on at the interview presided over by the English Professor Marrs, and so this brilliant man was rejected. Finally, he became a teacher at St Peter’s College and formed a Sinhala Society there. Kumaratunga Munidasa was his first choice for guest speaker.

At the University in Peradeniya, Sarachchandra became interested in producing Sinhala plays and he was helped in this regard by Professor E. F. C. Ludowyk who had studied classical Sinhalese. The production

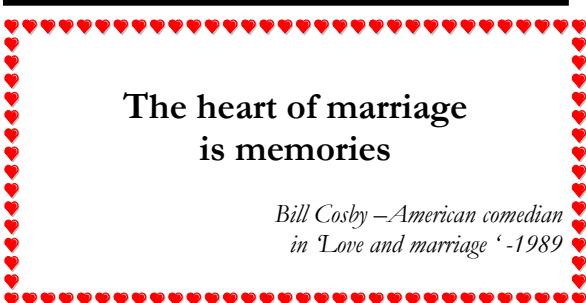
that eventuated as a result of their collaboration was “Kapuva Kapoti” an adaptation of Gogol’s “Marriage”. Despite several other productions of adaptations of European plays, Sarachchandra began doing intensive research into theatre all over the world and especially into the different forms of folk drama that had existed in Sri Lanka for centuries. He was searching for a new form which would create dramas suitable for the modern Sinhala-speaking audience. His research into the ancient forms was a massive project, which led to the publication of his book, *The Folk Drama of Ceylon*, which is still required reading for all those interested in the evolution of the Sinhala theatre. Travel to other countries such as India, China and Japan and also Europe and the United States followed as he continued his study and research into other forms of drama.

Sarachchandra was also a musician with considerable insight into the composition of music. He was to be found on stage with his actors at all his productions, playing the sitar. All his talents as philosopher, poet, musician and creative artist came together to forge “Maname”, “Sinhabahu” and his other plays, making him the country’s foremost playwright and poet. He was awarded many honours including the Ramon Magsaysay Award and the Kumaran Ashan commemoration award from Kerala. He wrote novels in English and also served as Ambassador to France. A man of learning who was also a nationalist, he believed firmly in the pluralistic model for Sri Lankan society. He lived a long life which enriched all those who came in contact with him and his works.

Shyamon was assisted during his talk by an electronic presentation managed by Hemal Gurusinghe which showed scenes from the Melbourne productions of “Maname”, “Sinhabahu” and “Mahasara”. In addition, Shyamon demonstrated the Nadagam style with some facial and body movements. Finally the overall effect was to bring Dr Ediriweera Sarachchandra vividly to mind in those who had known him and seen or read his works and roused considerable interest in those who had not.

The meeting concluded with the drawing of a raffle prize by Mrs Malini Jayasinghe which was won by Dr Sujiva Ratnaike.

Shelagh Goonewardene



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...who have joined since publication of Journal
31

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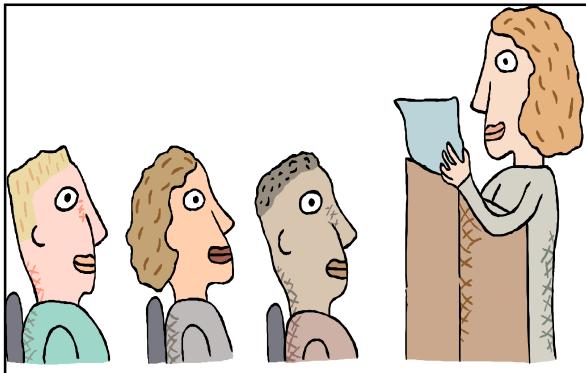
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NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

The Annual General meeting followed by Buffet Dinner and Sinagalong

Saturday 3rd December 2005

Venue: Thornleigh Community Centre
Cnr Phyllis and Central Avenue Thornleigh
NSW 2120
Time: 6.30 pm

Dinner bookings with treasurer—call Nada on (02) 9980 1701

NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING

Sunday 6th November 2005

Ranjith Dayaratne - Architect
will speak on
Geoffrey Bawa - The Genius of Place

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

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 - April/May, September/October and November/December. Dates can be arranged to suit availability of eminent speakers. Please contact President :Tony Peries on 02 9674 7515 or E-mail: Sri.p@bigpond.com

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