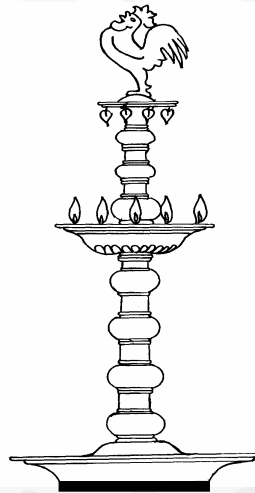


THE CEYLANKAN



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EDITORIAL



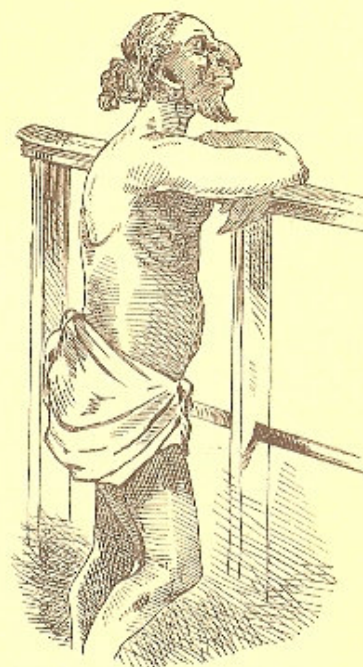
Your Editor is at the moment sitting in a cabin at his orchard in sweltering heat with temperature topping 41° Celsius and not even a fan to cool him—not that it will help much. So dear readers if this first issue for 2006 does not meet the usual high standard—spare a thought.

Our lead article in this issue comes from a long standing resident of London and one of

our most senior members - Malcolm Abayekoon. Most of us who have been to London would have at one time or another had a meal at Veraswamy's as it was known then. The anecdotes Malcolm recounts certainly generates a giggle when he describes the antics of "white sahibs" returned from a tour of duty in Ceylon. His own role as a waiter is dealt without rancour, in fact quite the opposite and his meeting with celebrities is simply recorded as a happening. A delicious beginning for the New Year which I hope will bring a lot of prosperity and happiness to all of you.

On that note, let me remind readers/ members to share their own pieces of prose. The editorial coffers need replenishment. Take a leaf from Decima Perera (p 7) who is still writing at 86+ young. There's gold in those memories—share them.

19th Century Images



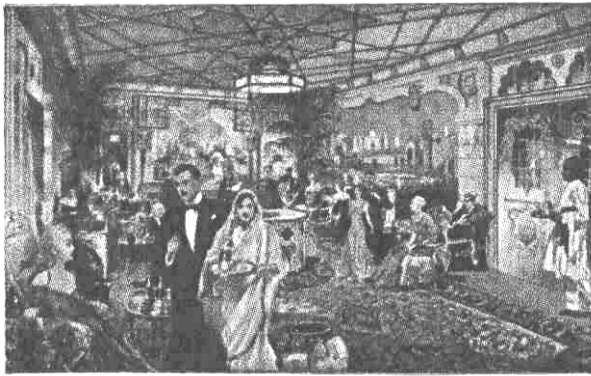
THE PRISONER.

(From a Sketch by John R. J. Vondra.)

Veeraswamy

By Malcolm Abeyekoon

About 200 yards from Piccadilly Circus at the corner of Regent and Swallow streets is Victory House. Although the entrance to that building is in Swallow Street, the postal address is 99 Regent Street, confusing for delivery people and others no doubt but this is England with its class system in various forms; a Regent Street address would be considered posh.



The Lounge -pre WW2 days

Standing outside Number 99 was a ruddy complexioned man wearing a long red Nehru jacket, black trousers and gold coloured turban, his name was Ali Khan, he had served in the Baluch Regiment during the Second World War. His war had been in the Middle East and Italy; he wore his campaign ribbons with pride. On the mezzanine floor of that building is Veeraswamys which was regarded as the best Indian restaurant outside of India. There were waiters there who had served the King Emperor in the two world wars, like the doorman they also pinned on their ribbons. When I worked there in the early 1950s and again for a short period later on, there were still quite a number of the Raj left. The sahibs and their mems came to have a meal and relive their days out in Injaar. That they could do, for there were turbaned waiters & sari clad receptionists. There was a punkah but no wallah to pull it; he had been made

but no wallah to pull it; he had been made redundant by Mr Carrier's air conditioner. There were also large potted palms, carved chairs imported from the Orient, ornate lamps from a Maharaja's palace and of course mulligatawny was on the menu. By then the sun was beginning to set on the British Empire but the yellow lamps in the restaurant gave a shimmering sun like glow while outside it may have been a foggy day in London town or pouring with rain on a midsummer's day. The restaurant had been opened in the mid 1920s by an Anglo Indian named Edward Palmer; his great-grandfather had been an English military officer who married an Indian princess, just like James Skinner of Skinners Horse did. Palmer sold the place to Sir William Steward whose family I believe owned Steward & Patterson's Brewery in Norwich. Sir William a Conservative Member of Parliament was dubbed "the curry king" by a London newspaper. I remember reading, that in search of recipes the knight had been to places in India where no other white man had been before.

Staff at the restaurant came from humble backgrounds and quite the opposite too. In my time there was a Burmese whose cousin was the President of that country, on the administrative staff for a short time there was a General who had been President of Pakistan. Of the Ceylonese one was from a family who lived in Cinnamon Gardens and the brother of another was a Bishop. The Colombo Seven man constantly grumbled about having to work as a waiter. I also did not like standing and waiting, but it was less degrading than being on the dole, and had I not worked there I would not have met a man who had dodged J. Edgar Hoover's G men. He was an Indian who was more American than Indian, or to be more precise Irish American. I have mentioned him in my book, but there is much more about Banarjee of Calcutta and

Chicago, to write about all that would extend this article beyond convenient limits. He was in a class of his own when it came to tales about America during the prohibition; he said he had transported booze for Al Capone! His other claim to fame was that he had lived in the US illegally and when caught was deported via Ellis Island; he had papers to prove that. I was with him one evening at a watering hole off Shaftsbury Avenue when he whispered to me in his Indian-American accent that he needed to get lost as he was being watched by a man from the FBI. Much of what he said sounded like pure fantasy, however he may have been a name-dropper who knew the people whose names he



A carved chair in the lounge, on either side can be seen the lamps that gave the sunshine effect

dropped. He must have lived among the Irish in America for he seemed to know a great deal about them, he spoke of their support for India's struggle to be free and after a few drams of the hard stuff his Indian eyes shone as he sang about smiling Irish eyes. Ban as he liked to be called was not a bad person even though he had worked for the mob.

Although there were Indians, Pakistanis, Ceylonese and other Asians working at the restaurant who were capable of being the manager that position and that of assistant manager were in my time held by Europeans. One of them was the legendary Fillipo Ferraro who had been the maitre at some very grand London restaurants. An assistant

manager from the south of Europe made a comment about "dirty Indians" and soon got a mouthful from Suleiman who happened to be nearby. The magnificent man had lived in England since the 1930s; he was more English than the English. On hearing that comment he said in his clipped English accent "dirty Indians, I'll have you know I have travelled widely in your country, I have seen your filthy slums." Perhaps due to his tours of the Mediterranean area he had a fondness for wine. After sipping a red or white he would pass comments such as "it's rather zingy", or "far from racy." Being fresh out of Wellawatte I did not know what he meant, but the way he said it was ever so posh.

Aung the Burmese was a graduate of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, he worked in the accounts department, which consisted of himself and Mr Rose the keeper of the ledgers. What I remember most about the man from Rangoon is the prawn blachan which he used to make himself. He kept a jar of the fiery preparation in his locker and sometimes let me have a taste of it. That did help for the staff food was far from good.

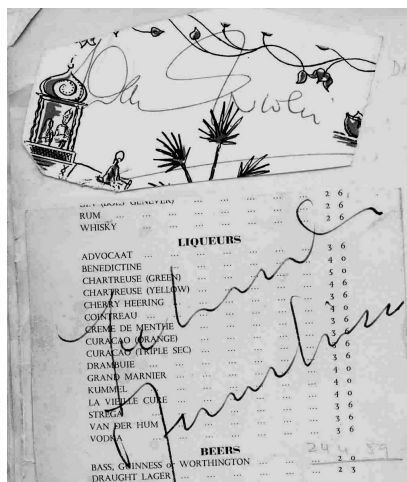
Strange as this may seem the Head Chef and his assistant were not Asians. The boss of the kitchen was a Frenchman and his assistant a Pole. There were also some cooks from Pakistan, west and east who did the chopping, grinding and curry making. The Pole had come here during WW 2. Poor fellow had a hard time with the Frenchman as his English was very poor. On more than one occasion I heard the chef say to him "speak English, I don't understand Warsaw."

The menus were printed daily and delivered at about 11 AM, the restaurant opened for lunch at noon. By today's standards what was on that card was basic, there was no chicken korahi, rogan gosh or meat phall, balti came many years later from Birmingham, but from the late 1950s chicken tandoori was on the menu priced at about ten shillings for a whole bird. Ceylon chicken curry was available, but was not at all like the fowl curry prepared in the old country.

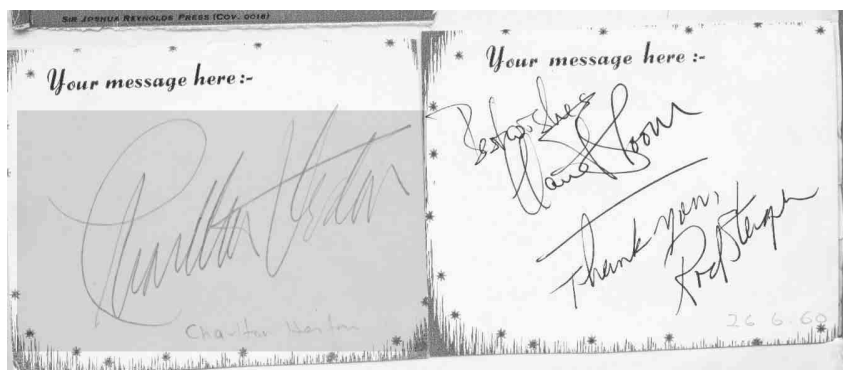
When VIP's from Ceylon came for a meal one of the senior Ceylonese waiters made pol sambol. The coconut was desiccated and as there was no Maldivian fish roasted coarsely chopped Bombay duck was used. Table d' hôte lunch cost about 17 shillings and 6 pence, a la carte at best would have been about £2.10 shillings per head. Lest it is not known chicken tikka masala is now the favourite food in Britain, fish and chips is still eaten and you can get it with curry sauce! On menus and message slips I obtained autographs of celebrities, some of those can be seen in this article. Coffee was prepared and served by Piyadasa from down south Ceylon and Raman a Fijian whose roots were in South India. The two very short men often argued over cardamoms. That spice was used to make what was called

Arab coffee; stocks of the condiment were kept in the store which was across the road. It was who fetched it from there that led to the battle stations situation. Their exchange of words was quite nasty and they often came very near to exchanging blows. One day I heard a big Pakistani waiter say to them "can't you small people find something bigger than cardamoms to squabble over?" Various blends of coffee were percolated or boiled in a copper kettle, there was however no tea. This led to complaints especially by people who had been out east in tea. Piyadasa later on did odd jobs and sold newspapers in the West End, Raman went off the rails due it was thought to taking to the bottle. I last saw him in the 1970s, a pathetic sight. That was indeed sad for he used to be a natty dresser who went over the top with talcum on his face and pomade on his top.

I hate to generalise, but what I have experienced especially when I worked at the restaurant was that the British who had lived in the colonies tended to be stuck up. They had been out sticking pigs, shot tigers from the backs of elephants, put down chota pegs at the Bengal and other clubs, looked down on the natives and lived like royalty, but that was there, this was here where most of them were nobodies, but they thought they were important when they came to places where they were waited upon by "natives." Usually they got away with their arrogance but not always for on the staff at that restaurant were some natives long resident here who put them in their place and there was Patrick, born in London. His father was Indian, mother English, he spoke with a pukka cockney accent and tolerated no nonsense from those who thought they were superior to dark skinned people. I remember three young



David Niven and Yehudi Menuhin. A chota peg of whisky just 2/6d.

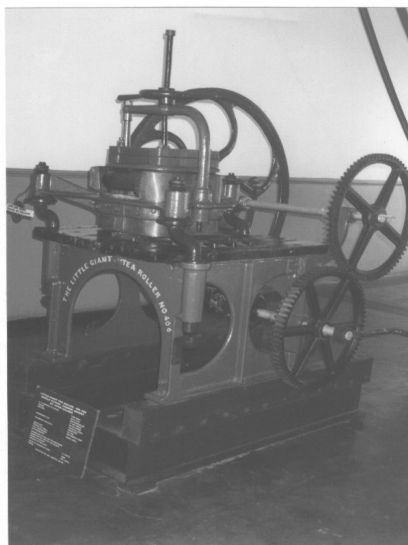


Charlton Heston (left), Claire Bloom and Rod Steiger (right)

men came to dine; they were tea planters on furlough from Ceylon. While I was serving them one spotted an Indian girl employed as a receptionist and said to his chums "I spy crumpet." For his bad luck Pat happened to be nearby and said to him "no crumpet here mate, if you want that go next door to the night club." I then heard one of them whisper "he is one of us." There were of course others who even though they had lived in the colonies were quite polite. Field Marshall Sir Claude Auchinleck who had joined the Indian

Army in 1904 and had been C in C India was a regular until he went to live in Morocco. He was a very civilised and decent person, it was a pleasure to serve the old soldier who liked his curries very hot and I mean red hot. He was one of many old Indian Army officers to march into the restaurant; most of them were first class types who thought highly of the Indian fighting man.

Veeraswamy's is now Veeraswamy, and is owned by Indians. Most of the old Indian hands who came there are now dead. The colonial décor has been replaced, but I am sure where I once stood and waited still maintains the high standards that made the restaurant known all over the world.



"The Little Giant" tea roller circa 1880

Another gem in Kandy!

by Beryl T Mitchell

On a recent holiday to Sri Lanka Doug and I visited a new and interesting 'must see' venue in close proximity to Kandy town. This new gem is the Ceylon Tea Museum.

Kandy being the heart of the original coffee and tea country, it is the perfect spot for the Ceylon Tea Museum. The abandoned Hantane Factory, in itself a gem from the past was leased from the JEDB in 1997 and conversion work began.

The four storey building with its fine wooden floors, sturdy stair cases and casement windows are now irrelevant, as new methods of tea manufacture do not require this typical old style tea factory. It therefore serves as the proud holder of some 19th and 20th century pieces of factory machinery, all primed and polished to their original glory, on the ground and first floor. Among the rare exhibits are a wonderful 'Little Giant' hand operated tea roller with a maximum capacity of 50 pounds green leaf, circa 1880- this machine was manufactured by John Walker.

There is also a very rare Hot Bulb Engine, over one hundred years old. My husband Doug, an ex- tea planter, and son of a tea planter as well, remembers seeing this ingenious precursor to the oil engines in an old factory he was familiar with. (The oil in the machine had to be heated using a blow-lamp before the engine could be crank started!)

A library and an auditorium with facilities for audio visual presentation is available on the 1st floor

There are some wonderful old billboards from very early times, and probably the oldest unopened packet of tea in the world! There is a very interesting story attached, of how this came into the hands of Directors of the Tea Museum. Plaques with the names of past Chairmen and Secretaries of the Planters' Association from the days of its inception and also of Life members stand proud and tall, and contain my great grandfather's name- R. B. Tytler- in its earliest days. Viewing this was a special thrill. It is good to see those hardy pioneers who gave Sri Lanka her start in a wonderful industry remembered in such a way. The James Taylor memorabilia formerly held in Loolecondra Estate, Hewaheta is also now on view at this Museum.

The third floor is devoted to kiosks selling

various brands of tea, and the fourth floor is the perfect place to have a cup of tea at the restaurant and enjoy the panoramic mountain views from this elevation. Hunasgiriya, the Knuckles and the Matala range of hills can be viewed through a telescope, if so desired.

The Museum was declared open in December 2001, but is still a work in progress. The surrounding grounds are to be landscaped with different varieties of tea, and its proximity to the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens and Loolecondra Estate, (where James Taylor grew the first commercial crop of tea) will make it a prime agricultural exhibit in the future. The Directors of the Museum are constantly searching for old and rare articles probably still stacked away in broken down factories, which could enhance the Museum, and so would love to hear of such items from anyone. Their address is Ceylon Tea Museum, P.O.Box 179, Hantane, Kandy, Sri Lanka. Web site: www.pureceylontea.com

The Museum was the brain child of a band of planters devoted to preserve the origins of the tea industry, the Planters Association, The Sri Lanka Tea Board, assisted by The Tea Research Institute, Colombo Tea Traders Association and many other authorities with an interest in the Industry. Doug and I were fortunate to meet the 'king-pins' on the day we decided to visit the Museum. Gathered for a meeting on that morn, were Chairman Mr Ajit Goonatilleke, Tea Museum Manager, Mr D. Madugalla, and Director Mr Sene Seneviratne, who was the prime promoter of this project.

As stated in the Ceylon Tea Museum brochure, the primary objectives of the tea museum are:

'To exhibit memorabilia, machinery, documents, books, pictures and objects of historical value to the tea industry.

To promote tea as a global beverage, thereby enhancing tea exports.

To publish and distribute materials for the enrichment of the tea industry.

To exploit the tourism potential of the tea

industry, strengthening Sri Lanka's image as the world's number one exporter.

To educate Sri Lanka's youth on the history of the tea industry and its contribution to the economy.' All these objectives are admirable sentiments any Sri Lankan should consider worthy of continued support.

The road up to Hantane, just three miles from town, is a pleasant experience. It winds up past the Bogambara Stadium, and the General Hospital on the Uduwela road, making the Tea Museum very accessible.

Beryl T Mitchell is the author of 'Tea, Tytlers and Tribes: An Australian Woman's memories of tea planting in Ceylon'

Remembering the Depression and More

Part 2

by Decima Perera

Returning to our home was heart-breaking and we had missed school too. The beautiful tapestry upholstery of the carved ebony chairs had been replaced with cheap handloom material. The matching luxurious carpet was gone – only the more hard-wearing cane matting, well-washed, remained in the drawing room and the coir matting in the verandah; the "old crock" car, parked in a part of the cowshed, on which my brother and I had gone on our imaginary journeys, was gone, as also the Chrysler which had started to give trouble earlier for lack of spare parts. My mother's wedding saree, weighed down with real silver embroidery was not hanging in her wardrobe anymore, nor were my father's top hat and morning-suit, which he never wore since the wedding. Water had seeped into the door of the big Chubbs iron-safe and kept leaking long afterwards; some of the velvet-lined jewellery boxes had to be thrown out too. The corks of some bottles of Dry Monopole Champagne left over from

the wedding, showed signs of deterioration, so we children had our first taste of champagne, which I did not like. It was remarkable how so many breakables were saved, including the pair of Celadon flower-pot stands in the drawing room. What I missed most were my two prize books – Aesop’s Fables and a child’s edition of Homer’s Iliad.



Decima (left) mother Maria and sister Cynthia at Peiris Walauwa

There was no money for new mattresses for our numerous beds. The ticking covers had been washed, as well as the coir stuffing and sewn up again. They stank for long while. The pillows, clothes and linen had been packed onto higher shelves of the various cupboards and wardrobes and were saved.

My sister and I jogged along in a rickshaw to school for the remainder of that term and it needed a big effort to catch up with what we had missed. My brother had moved on to St. Joseph’s College. I think he took the tram, which stopped almost at our gate, up to the Maradana Station and walked the short distance from there to St. Joseph’s. I used to wonder whether this freedom tempted him to play truant, as that was what he did and added to my father’s woes. When the English typist and the clerk in the office were laid off with the dwindling business, my father had employed a young man who was found a

job at Vavaseurs and provided with board and lodging and after work, to supervise my brother’s home work. Now he was also gone and my brother could not cope with Latin and Elementary Science and even the Maths. This young man sometimes did my homework too, when I had one of my bad headaches about this time. Coping with all the troubles my brother caused would have broken another man. Sadly, my brother, running away from home, met with a violent, undeserved death when he was twenty three.

My father sold the machinery at the mine and gifted the property with a small house on it, to the manager Joseph Fernando who used to occupy it, as he had not been able to pay his wages. He sold his rubber estate to Sir Susantha Fonseka for half the price of the first offer, when the rubber price plummeted to five cents a pound. He had also sold his Jawatte property in this depressed market, settled all his debts and negotiated with my mother’s family to acquire my mother’s ancestral home in Dehiwala to prevent it from going under the hammer, as my maternal grandfather and my uncle were also in trouble. My mother was heir to one fourth of the entailed property and her siblings were all majors, so after a lot of wrangling and arbitration, we moved into “Peiris Walauwa”, with grandmother living with us and grandfather opting to move to his property in Polgahawela, though this arrangement did not last long.

With no car now, my parents decided to remove us from St. Bridget’s and send us to Holy Family Convent, Bambalapitiya, my mother’s old school, and my brother to St. Peter’s. The sympathetic nuns at St. Bridget’s would not hear of it. I had come first in class at the previous term tests for the first time in my life. They offered me one of the several scholarships donated earlier by affluent past pupils, and the concession to pay the fees when things were more settled. And so, we became boarders and my mother had a time of it, making more clothes for us. Luckily she was a good dressmaker. Our clothes used to be washed and ironed at home, so we used to

manage with less. She had also to find smaller sheets to fit the hospital-style iron beds, pillow-cases and towels, etc., and these came to us in dribbles, once we moved in. My mother came every Saturday in a rickshaw to see us, bringing combs of ripe plantains from Panchikawatte where they grew abundantly, or amberella preserve or coconut rock from the trees at Dehiwala, milk- toffee from the milk of our cows, mangoes or pumpkin preserve, kalu-dodol or sow-dodol, so we became quite popular and accepted.

While in the Boarding I never let myself forget my father's problems and never asked him to pay for music, tennis or dancing lessons and even forfeited a chance to participate in a Greek dance presented at a public concert, as I did not want him to spend for an elaborate costume, which would have been of no use afterwards. I had been in two dance items earlier, before the bubble burst. He did pay though for a private Latin tutor a Royal College Master, Mr. Jayaweera Bandara, to help me in the senior class much later and I rewarded him by getting a Distinction in Latin.

I fulfilled the good nuns' expectations and my parents too, by keeping my nose to the grindstone where studies were concerned and winning both the Junior and Senior Cambridge gold medals awarded by the school for the student with the highest marks and Honours passes at both exams. Afterwards, I was offered a teaching post which I enjoyed, till I left to marry a Doctor at age nineteen.

Aware of the difficulty for the labour forces at the Port, Railway Workshops and offices in Colombo to find accommodation in the City, my father sub-divided the large house at Panchikawatte, reserving some rooms for his use and rented it. His office building and the numerous sheds were converted into

tenements; he built a row of shops on the main-road frontage and became solvent again. Some Indian traders in the business of fumigating spices for export got him to put up smoke-rooms, which they rented. There were coconut and fruit trees on the Dehiwala property and later my mother started a small dairy business on the premises. By the time I had passed my exams, he was not as rich as before but comfortable enough, to own a car again, take us out of the Boarding, and when the time came, to



Decima and Kingsley
engaged 1938, opposite Peiris
Walauiwa

provide us three girls with reasonable dowries. He sold the Panchikawatte property to Sir Ernest Fernando (E.P.A.) and invested in houses for us. He sold his Moratuwa inheritance too.

My father had taken very much to heart the prediction of the Buddhist monk, so he registered the Dehiwala property in my mother's name and later the house he brought in Pentreave Gardens, Colpetty, in

my name and the six-bedroom house he built on forty perches of the Dehiwala land in my second sister's name. Later, my mother gifted the Walauiwa property to my youngest sister. I came to own some of the Dehiwala land too, when we sold the Colpetty one. My grandmother's dowry property meant much to me.

Most Sri Lankans are prone to gorge on mountainous plates of rice and curry and put on weight. Not so my father. Latterly, he limited his meat intake too. I do not know who his 'Veda' was, but he avoided fatty seer fish and kept to the smaller varieties like sprats and salayo (of which even the bones can be consumed) in a miris malu,

without coconut milk. This provided calcium and phosphorous, I suppose. Cooling vegetables and mainly gotu-kola for greens, complemented his diet plus a few cups of tea with plenty of milk. He never went bald, blind or deaf. Whatever it was, he was never seriously ill at any time to warrant admission to a hospital till into his eighties, when he had a mild stroke and was admitted to Durdans Hospital, where he passed away peacefully after five days, with his favourite daughter, me, holding his hands together in prayer and his family around him. With all the trials he faced, the biggest I think, being the disappointment of his only son, he held his head high "bloodied but unbowed",

I was happy that we did not have to leave St. Bridget's where I had as classmate, boarding-mate and life-long friend our famous Sirima. Later, I met Mr. Bandaranaike too, and visited their homes in Colombo and Horagolla and entertained Sirima in my home. Of the other famous Sri Lankan names that touched my life as a Bridgetean was Rupa Senanayake, daughter of F. R Senanayake who was a short-term classmate and Lakshmi, daughter of Sir John Kotelawela, who was in a class I taught. With a Bridgetean past pupils group, I visited his home in Ratmalana after he had retired. Perhaps my marriage to a Doctor was also due to my successful Bridgetean education. My husband-to-be attended my last Prize-giving, when I won the second Gold Medal. As a Doctor's wife I met and socialized with many prominent people as we moved around Sri Lanka.

Unhappily, now at St. Bridget's and other schools as well, Singhalese, Tamils and Burghers are no longer classmates and friends. Through the years I had many Tamil friends – Mallihai Wijenathan, Yogamani Yogasunderam, Regina Tissaverasinghe, Thangaratnam Edwards and Pathmawathy Manicam among others. Burgher friends were Edith Bartholomeusz, Bertha Mathysz, Doreen Melhuisen, Marguerite de

Jong, Mavis Spittel, Irene Capper, Yvonne Mack, Thelma Stevens, Rena de Bond, Therese Swan and Kathleen O'Connel. Boarding mates were Doris Schofield and her sisters, Henrietta de Vos and of short duration, Marie Pugh, Rosie Northway, Helen Travers. Burgher or Eurasian teachers were Misses Lockhart, Riordan, Orme, and Ingram among others. I kept up with a few of them. Some of their surnames appear on T.V. now and then, bringing back memories and I keep wondering how they have all fared. I know that some have passed on and that many emigrated.

concluded

PERKS OF BEING OVER 60

Kidnappers are not very interested in you.

In a hostage situation you are likely to be released first.

No one expects you to run--anywhere.

People call at 9 p. m and ask,
" Did I wake you?"

There is nothing left to learn the hard way.

Things you buy now won't wear out.

You can live without sex but not without your glasses.

You get into heated arguments about pension plans.

You no longer think of speed limits as a challenge.

You quit trying to hold your stomach in no matter who walks into the room.

You sing along with elevator music.

Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the national weather service.

Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either.

Oh! To be an Engine Driver Part 2

by Victor Melder

The start of the second year, saw work on the footplate of passenger trains begin. The first four months was in the role of the second fireman on the open line. The duties were mainly to ensure the head fireman had an adequate supply of coal readily available on hand for firing whilst on the run (all coal had to be broken down to the size of one's fist for easy firing and ignition).

The duties also included assisting in watering the locos at watering points enroute and also checking when possible that the lubrication points were (outside the loco) in order and topping up with lubricants when and where necessary. One was also expected to keep a sharp lookout whilst on the run, which included the position of signals etc.

The next four months saw us graduating to the role of head fireman. In the case of the lower steam link, this was a one fireman position, for short distance trains. The duties were combined roles of both head fireman and second fireman. The next four months, saw us in the role of head fireman on long distance trains, with an allocated second fireman. This was a responsible task, always maintaining a steady head of steam and water, and maintaining a presentable footplate. Another year had gone by.

The beginning of the third year, saw us firing on the long distance trains and fast good trains, which seemed to always run at night. One had an assigned Engine Driver to work under and an assigned second fireman, which resulted in team work, to ensure the trains arrived at their destinations on time. A head fireman and second fireman, came on duty at least an hour before the driver did. By the time the driver came on duty, the loco would have its boiler cleaned or brushed down, watered and ready for take off, with a full head of steam. The driver would carry out a cursory inspection of the loco and be ready to whistle out at the appointed time.

Firing trains on both upper and lower sections, were different to each other. In the Colombo area, where the railway did not encounter much hilly terrain, one had to fire infrequently compared to the constant climbing which required frequent firing of the loco to maintain a steady head of steam and water. On the lower section, express trains were much easier to fire, than stop and start trains, as they did not need that much firing.



The Garratt Loco—monstrous machines used to haul upcountry trains
Driver Jack Carson standing in the cab—Photo courtesy David Hyatt

On the Upper section, due to the frequency of the firing that took place, the fire-box tend to fill up quickly and half way up the incline, one would have to clean out the excess ashes from the fire box, by rocking the firebox grate to drop the ashes off. This was necessary to enable good ignition and

to maintain a bright fire, required for steaming qualities. It was very strenuous and demanding work.

The next four months, saw the fifty apprentices temporarily stationed at Nawalapitiya, for upper section service. This was where the Beyer Peacock Garratt locos were in service. Mercifully they had been modified from coal burners to oil burners and only required one fireman, as there was no stoking of the firebox. A regulator lever operated to control the flow of furnace oil that fired the loco. What looked a laborious task was quite simple indeed, as long as one maintained a steady head of steam for the



Garratt loco watering at Galboda
Photo courtesy David Hyatt

journey.

The Garratt Locos, were monstrous locos that were able to haul trains on the incline, work that normally two locos did. Whilst a normal loco hauled five carriages on its own, a Garratt loco could haul nine. When passenger traffic warranted it and trains had over nine carriages or had a large number of freight wagons, then a Garratt loco hauled the train assisted by a loco from behind.

When a train was worked by two normal locos (one pulling, the other pushing) and they reached the summit level at Pattipola (in either direction), the loco pushing (piloting) would travel around to the front the train and be coupled in front the loco

already in front and the two locos took the train down the incline. With a Garratt loco this could not be done as the bridges could not take the combined weight. The pilot loco therefore ran down single, following the train.

My father was stationed at Nawalapitiya as a senior driver at the time, and it wasn't a picnic working with him. He believed in the practical side of things and always had the apprentices carrying out some extra duties or the other to acquaint themselves with the loco. I had more than my fair share.

After the four months upcountry, we were back at Dematagoda on the K. V. steam locos. From the sublime to the ridiculous, I would say after the Garratt locos upcountry. Here the work was much easier and at a slower pace, as the trains did not run at speed like their mainline counterparts. The last two months of the third year saw us on the two types of diesel locos on the K.V. line, the Hunslett and Krupp diesels, which worked the passenger trains. For once this was a 'cushy, sit-down' job, doing nothing exciting, but keeping a sharp lookout and exchanging tablets on the run. The third year had come to an end and 'the light at the end of tunnel was getting closer'.

The fourth year saw us all at the Diesel loco shed at Maradana, which was checked by jowl with the Maradana railway station. During the first three months we worked with the diesel mechanical fitters and the following three months with the electrical fitters. Heavy emphasis was placed on a working knowledge of the electrical circuits of the different diesel locos in service, to ensure the drivers were able to attend to electrical faults enroute and bring the train home. This was again a period of lectures and demonstrations.

We also spent three months at the Ratmalana workshops, where the diesels were

stripped down to the core and refitted after major repairs, to ensure we had a look at what went on inside the many closed and sealed working parts. This was again a 7.00am to 4.00pm day job. Back again at the Diesel shed, Maradana, saw us riding as assistants for the next three months on all the diesel locos in service – The Brush Bragnal (M1), General Electrical (M2), Hunslett locos (G2) and Diesel Rail Cars.

After the final written test on Diesel locos we began our fifth and final year, which was that of shunting engine driver. The first six months were spent at Maligawatte Yard on steam shunting locos and the next three months as shunting drivers on the diesel shunting locos at Colombo goods yard. The final three months were spent as assistants on the M1 and M2 locos working all the fast passenger and mail trains.

I was finally appointed Engine Driver Class III on July 6, 1962, as mentioned earlier I lost eight months of my apprenticeship due to my illness and had to make up the time up. This appointment was on three years probation, on the initial salary of the scale Rs 1,680 – 72 – Rs 2,184, per annum.

Little did the general travelling public realise that they had well trained and qualified engine drivers working their trains to time.

concluded

.....
...hmmm when you think about it!

 This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one, the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap, the being a force of nature instead of a feverish clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

George Bernard Shaw

When the Boer Prisoners met The Colts Souvenir of a historic cricket match

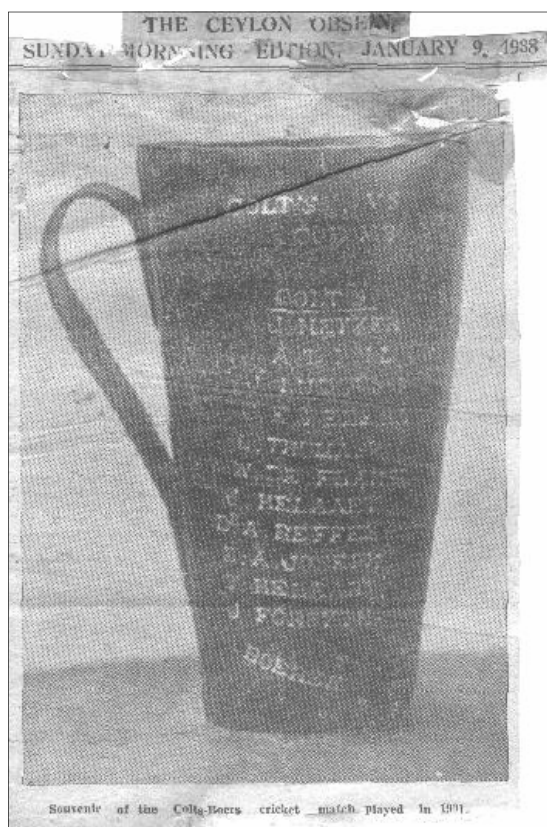
Extract from The Ceylon Observer Sunday morning edition January 9th 1938.

Submitted by Claire Herft - Victoria - from her fathers' / grandfathers collection of paper cuttings.

A little over thirty-six years ago there happened to be in Ceylon many hundreds of Boer Prisoners of War, who had been sent out from South Africa, while the war between Britain and the Boers was in progress. These Prisoners of War including several excellent sportsmen were interned at Diyatalawa, where a great military camp was established with the West Kents and the Gloucesters in turn acting as a guard for the Boer POW's. Diyatalawa's salubrious climate was one of the reasons that induced the Imperial Government to select Ceylon as a place of internment for several hundred of Boer prisoners.

After the South African war and the return to the Transvaal, Natal the Orange River Colony and Cape Colony of the Boer Prisoners of War, the Diyatalawa Camp was turned into a military and naval training ground and a convalescent station for both the army and navy..

A few days ago I was shown a tumbler made out of a horn of an Ox, by one who had been a Boer POW at Diyatalawa. This drinking vessel is of historic interest as on it are carved the names of two cricket teams that played in a match on the old Nondescripts ground in Victoria Park, where now stands the Town Hall. The rivals in that cricket match were the Colts CC and the Boer Prisoners of War XI from Diyatalawa. The reproduction of this horn tumbler shows the names of the Colts eleven, then regarded as an invincible side.



Souvenir of the Colts-Boers cricket match played in 1901

The Editor apologises for the poor quality of the picture. Well, photocopies from a paper cutting that old must have its drawbacks.

They are as follows:

J C McHeyzer, A T Pollocks, J Ludovici, C E Perera, L Thomasz, J Kelaart, Dr. A Raffel, W de Fransz, E A Joseph, T Kelaart, and J Forsyth. The names of "The Boers XI" are also inscribed on this tumbler which I may now add is in the possession of U T Perera, a member of the St Joseph's College cricket eleven.

The Boers: G Kotze, C Van Zyl, T Hilder, J Scheepers, G Sennett, A Smuts, D Du Toit, P de Villiers, P du Flessis, J Codzer and C Otto.

Old Test Player

I had the privilege of seeing that memorable cricket match which was played on July 5th and 6th though nearly 38 years have elapsed since then I can still visualise many of the

leading incident in that game. The match had been discussed for weeks before the day on which play began. The Boers were said to have two or three men who had played for South Africa against Lord Hawke's team in 1894. One of them, the captain on this occasion was Peter de Villiers, a really fine all round cricketer with a very distinguished record as a sportsman and soldier, Commander Van Zyl a burly batsman, G Kotze, P du Flessis and Sennet, all showed ability as batsmen.

The huge crowd of spectators on the first day included H. E. the Governor Sir West Ridgeway, a keen supporter of cricket and H.E. the Major General. As Sir West arrived at the match the Boer prisoners team lined up beside the Governors tent and gave him three hearty cheers. There was no pavilion on the NCC grounds in those days and tents had to do duty instead as a protection against the sun and also as a dressing room for the players. These tents were pitched on the side of the ground adjacent to Turret Road and just opposite Calverly House, where lived the great Frederick Dornhorst, President of the Colts Cricket Club.

Invincible Eleven

As I said before the Colts eleven enjoyed a enviable reputation in those days as an unbeatable side. True it is that Sir S M Burrows eleven had won a victory over them at N'Elia in 1899. In spite of that the Colts were regarded as an "invincible" side and all Ceylon was proud of them. Of the eleven that beat the Boers on that occasion J C McHeyzer, C E Perera, L Thomasz, J Kelaart, W de Fransz and E A Joseph have passed away. We still have among us Dr Allan Raffel, Tommy Kelaart, Jim Ludovici, still bowling very effectively, A T Pollocks and J Forsyth, the fast bowler of the Railway.

Classic Batting

The outstanding feature of the match was the brilliant display of 90 not out in the first innings of the Colts by the late C E Perera.

Ceylon has never produced a greater batsman than this old Wesley College captain, who in his first match for the Colts against Capt Ward Jackson's representative European XI scored 71 not out on Galle Face in 1898, while yet a schoolboy. Against the good bowling of the Boers C E Perera played like a master. When I mention the fact that the Colts total in the first innings was only 146 and of this C E Perera scored 90, not out, and the next highest score was 19 by J Ludovici one can get an idea of the value of Perera's innings to the Colts. No one else was able to get into double figures and D Thomasz who made 6 runs was the third highest scorer on his side. Extras amounted to 12.

Boers' best bowler

Otto, a fast bowler, did excellent work with the ball, claiming 7 wickets for 50 runs and bowling unchanged through Colts innings. Although it was a very warm day and C E Perera batted so magnificently Otto sent down 28 overs of which 9 were maidens. The batting of the Boers was not as good as their bowling and fielding. They were all out for 53 in the first innings, P du Flessis scoring 25 and C van Zyl 19. Five batsmen failed to score a run. J Ludovici took 3 wickets for 8 and Lawrie Thomasz 3 for 7. Batting a second time Colts scored only 114, Julie Heyzer being top scorer with 36. This time Otto and Villiers bowled well, the latter taking 6 for 64 with his good length leg breaks of slow medium pace. Kotze held 4 excellent catches while Sennet did a clever thing in stumping "Banda" Kelaart - a very rare feat indeed.

Boers beaten

The Boers needed 207 runs to get to win but they were all out for 66 and the Colts won a victory by 141 runs. This time G Kotze alone got into double figures, scoring 23. E A Joseph and C E Perera took all the wickets between them, the former having the excellent analysis of 8 wickets for only 31. Before me is an old faded photograph showing the two teams in that historic

match. P H de Villiers wearing a beard is seated besides Allan Raffel, the Colts captain, next to whom is the burly Commander Van Zyl, who greatly amused the crowd, while he was out fielding, by carrying each Colts batsman as he got out, from the wickets to the tents. Van Zyl sported a large, wide brimmed straw hat. The Colts umpire on that occasion was A C Solomonsz while Dr S P Joseph was then Honorary Secretary of the club.

The match was fully reported in the "Ceylon Independent" and a reproduction of this in booklet form was issued later. I happened to have a copy of that souvenir which is mentioned in the "Bibliography of Cricket" as published by "The Cricketer" I wonder if any other copy of that booklet is to be found in Ceylon today.

Regrettably the name of the reporter is not indicated in the paper cutting - Ed

Growing up in a Village in the 50s and 60s – part 4

by Siri Gamage

The Goigama and Karawa families usually address Vahumpura families by words such as Umba, Tho in normal conversations.

The Vahumpuras considered these words as derogatory. When the latter addressed those from the Goigama and Karawa families they used more reverential terms such as Mahattaya, Nona, Ralahamy, Mudalali. Within their own communities, well to do Vahumpuras addressed others by using the same derogatory terms and in return others addressed them with terms like Mahattaya, Nona etc. When the free Swabhasa (vernacular) education was introduced and young people started to receive education, the number of Mahattayas and Nonas increased among Vahumpuras. The children of some Karawa families started to migrate

to Colombo, as were the children of Vahumpura families after education or for education and employment.

The Bo tree opposite my father's shop is called Bo Kotuwa and has a retaining wall and a shrine room surrounding the tree. On full moon days villagers offer flowers and incense etc. and use the place for worship. There was a landowning person called Tambi Mudalali – a Sinhalese but called so due to his miserliness. He was not married and was very religious. Knowing his religiosity, one day a young chap took a torch with colour lights and climbed the tree at night. He had arranged for another to send a message to Tambi Mudalali to tell him that he can see the signs of a God making his presence. Mudalali came to the place immediately and started to worship the gods while the youngsters laughed at the event. Later on the guy who was on the tree moved to another tree across the paddy field and lighted his colour lights. The point was proved. When Tambi Mudalali goes to town or Matara he would not give any hint that he is going away for the day. He thought people would steal coconuts and bananas etc. from his lands. In order to avoid suspicion, he would dress normally until he passes Weliamuna Bridge and then put his outer sarong in a bag and go with a fairly new sarong, shirt and the jacket. Once he died his brother's family inherited his property.

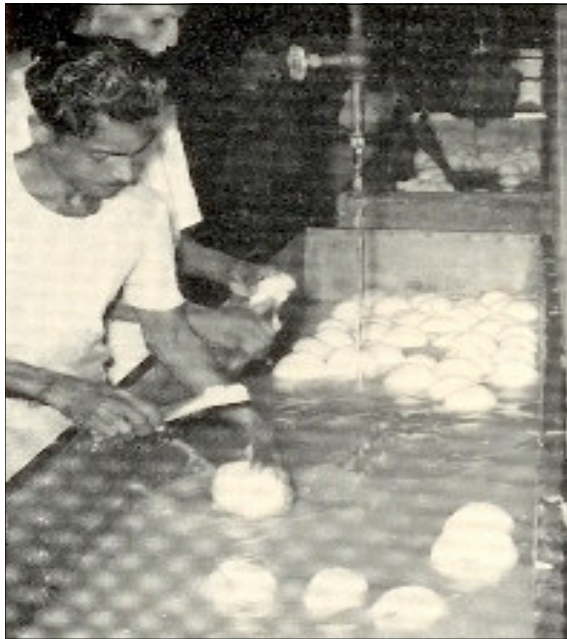
People who were labelled as lower status even by the Vahumpuras occupied a section of the village called Neraluwa. People in that section did menial work. Plucking coconut was considered as one such activity. Eating beef was also considered as something menial and lowly especially if not bought from the shops. The people in Neraluwa knew how to skin cattle and carve it out. On occasions this was a stolen cattle or one which died of natural causes. In the seventies a variety of fish called Japan Korali was introduced to the market. This was

considered as a fish type not favoured by the rich and famous. People from Neraluwa bought this, as it was cheaper. This added to their inferiority. However today Japan Korali – a variety of tank fish – has become common among many. Fish stalls at Walaswamulla pola are generally rich in variety unless when there are shortages due to bad weather. Dried fish, Maldives fish, and fresh fish are available in abundance. It formed a major part of the meals.

The coconut tree occupied a special place among the villagers, as was the jackfruit tree. Apart from the fact that coconuts gave cream for making curries and oil for making sweets such as dodol, the oil could also be applied on hair. All parts of the tree were used for various needs. Coconut shells were used to make charcoal to heat the iron, or making wooden spoons to be used in cooking. The treacle was used to make Ra (toddy) or syrup or Juggery. Coconut flowers were used in ceremonies such as weddings and religious rituals as it symbolised success or auspiciousness. The cover of the flower when dried could be used to fire the hearth. C Woven coconut leaves were used to cover the roofs, and with the spine of the leaf called an 'ekel', brooms were made. Dried coconut husk was used in making brooms as well. Coconut wood was used in making rafters, the main construction material for the roof. Thus all parts of the coconut tree were useful for the village folk.

However, when the trees were located too close to houses or shops and when cyclones happened, the winds would bend the trees sometime they fell near or on houses injuring people and causing damage. Generally Mahattayas could not climb the trees. It required a special skill to climb. My father who had leased a six acre block of land with about 500-600 coconut trees for over 30 years was in a relatively privileged position compared to other villagers who owned lesser amounts of land. Yet he had to give part of the income to the landowner. Subsequently we bought part of the land when it was sold. Making copra was my father's

business. In addition to the coconuts from the lands near the house he bought others' coconuts also and turned them into copra,



Removing the white flesh from the coconut shell

which he transported to a wholesale buyer in Matara. The process of making copra is interesting. After removing the husk, the workers would break the coconuts and lay them in the sun to dry for several days. Once they are half dry, they would be laid in a large tray in the pol massa (oven house) behind the house. Underneath coconut shells were stacked in four to five double lines and fired. The resulting heat and smoke cured the coconut to yield 'copra' over the next few days. They were later put in bags and sealed for transport. When I passed my GCE Ordinary level examination my father had to spend the whole income he received from the sale of copra at Matara in order to fulfil a promise he made before the exam. That is to buy me a brand new half size bicycle. He did the same when I passed my HSC as well. This time it was a brand new Humber Bicycle, which I used to go to school and back. In the front it had a box in which I could carry my books. I parked it in the storeroom of a Tamil shop owner in Walasmulla. My father who could speak Tamil, was very friendly with the

Tamil shop owners who had come from Jaffna and elsewhere in the north to set up business. (After the 1983 riots however all of them left town). The driver of the lorry, which carried copra to Matara and brought groceries including herbal medicine for my father's shop, was called Hamu mahattaya. He came from a Salagama family near Radaniara, and was a very pleasant man. The first time when I went with my father to Matara in the lorry, I got travel sickness. Yet after walking through the bridge and streets of Matara, and seeing my father collect the money from the purchaser (Tel Kade), my sickness vanished and it was a joyous occasion.

Matara has a special place in my youth, as this is where I caught the train to go to Peradeniya University in 1968. I would get up around 2.00 am and go to Walasmulla town to get a bus, which took me to Matara. At 6.30 a.m Ruhunu Kumari left Matara and arrived at Fort station around 9.30. On one such trip, I saw Rohana Wijeweera (the leader of JVP an insurgent group) dressed as a servant travelling in the same train but he got off at Ambalangoda. The government was looking for him as a fugitive at the time.

I changed trains to Uda Rata Menike with coal-fired engine, and got down at Sarasaw Uyana station at Peradeniya. By the time I arrived I had exchanged one climatic zone for another. Drizzly rain was a common occurrence in Peradeniya those days and without a rain coat or an umbrella one would be soaked in no time. As the Colombo-Matara train passed through villages and towns bordering the coastal line, I could see more coconut trees, modern houses, cars and busses waiting to pass railway crossings, and people who were different to those in the village. I felt that I was conquering the cities or at least empowering myself with this trip. Even though I was not an urbanite, this train trip through the cities made me comfortable about strange places that I had not visited before.

The Royal Ceylon Navy Stories from its beginning and its end

The Navy's first Operations Base: H.M.Cy.S. "Kal Aru"

MCPO E.A.Jansen (Rtd.)

Early days: 1953

The Royal Ceylon Navy, since 1946, was based in Colombo. All its work, other than training, was carried out from here. Training of recruits only was done in Diyatalawa.

The Army and Navy were called upon to carry out various duties from time to time. A new duty that had been given was anti-smuggling work. Troops were to be deployed along the northern coast both to north and south of Mannar. The Army set up a central base at Mannar and established some small camps along the coast from which soldiers patrolled the beaches. Probably because their man-power was limited, one of these camps was handed over to the Navy. It, therefore, became the first base outside Colombo, as far as the Navy was concerned.

The camp was situated a little inland from the coast along a little river, which was almost always dry, called "Kal Aru". It was about 40 miles south of Mannar and the nearest town, if you can call it that, was Silavatturai, about 8 miles away along a jungle track.

This base was commissioned H.M.Cy.S. "KalAru" with Lt.P.D.Nathanielsz in command.

It was not a very "posh" base because there were only three cadjan huts in it. One was the Armoury and for the two officers, one for the sailors and one for the Galley. There

was no proper floor because the huts were built on sea sand, and the beds sank into the sand under you, when you sat or slept in them.

In my time, I remember cooks John and Peter Singho, SBA Baron (now deceased) Signalmen Jansen (myself) and Hamidon, Tels. Khalid and Jansz, and also Eddie Mead, Hugh Koelmeyer, S. Abeysena, Bryan Thiedeman, Lankatilleke, M. Nicholas, C.S.B. Ratnayake and S/A Navaratnam. There were others also whose names I have now forgotten.

Living conditions were quite primitive. We had the sea for bathing and we would dig in the bed of the dried-up river to get some water. Sometimes we went to an Abyssinian well about three miles away in the jungle for a fresh water bath, but even there the water was still saline. Drinking water was brought in a big barrel in a jeep provided by the Army at Mannar. We got our other needs from Silavatturai travelling along a jungle clearing by bullock cart: it was on these trips that we stopped at the Abyssinian well. Meat for curries was no problem because there was plenty of Rabbit, Pig and Deer in the jungle. When the C.O. went to Mannar for a drink he would get us some more edibles, and Beer. The beach doubled up as "Heads" for us.

Our duties were simple. We would leave camp in two groups of two sailors and split up to proceed north and south of the camp along the beach, keeping a weather-eye open for suspicious boats. We had our rifles but, more importantly, tea and sugar. We would go about 10-12 miles and rest. We used to dig a hole in the ground and light a fire and brew tea. All the while we were watching out for vallams. We would return to camp at first light. We never caught a smuggler and don't know what we would have done if we did!

One day, Hugh Koelmeyer was cleaning a .22 rifle in the Armoury and did not check

whether it was loaded. He accidentally pressed the trigger and the bullet went through the cadjan walls hitting C.S.B.Ratnayake, who was levelling the sand outside, in the foot. It was about 0930 and the two officers, Lts. Nathanielsz and Balthazaar had left for Mannar in the jeep. The only transport available was a bicycle, but it had “flat” tyres. Anyway, don’t ask me how, I pedalled it to Silavatturai and contacted the C.O. at Mannar. He came about 1700 and despatched Ratnayake to Anuradhapura hospital.

When the light faded, we lit a hurricane lamp and hung it on the roof. In about half an hour, the chimney became as black as the night with soot, and it was darkness till dawn after that. As usual among Navy types, we used to tell yarns and lies to keep going and, somehow or another, a story about bears crept in. At about 2200 one night there was a shout “Bear in the hut!”. It was every man for himself. Bryan Thiedeman, weighing about 200 lbs, jumped from bed to bed, landing right on Peter Singho’s face. While the rest of us were up, the old cook lay bleeding on the sand floor. Worse, nothing could be done: SBA Baron was too busy repeating Buddhist “gathas”. Peter Singho was taken to hospital the next morning and what a sight he was when he was brought back! Only his eyes and mouth were visible with the whole face covered in plaster of paris!

Those were the days!

Towards the end: 1971

Some personal experiences of “Insurgency 1971”

The Navy was called upon to fight on land, to safeguard law and order against a group of revolutionaries, for the first time in 1971. I was then in Trincomalee and I think it will be interesting to set down at least my personal experiences so that some things that happened in those days will not be forgot-

ten.

At that time, although the Navy had standard operational procedures when going on emergency duties, things happened so fast that we did not have the time to follow them. So we did what we could, with what we had.

The first day H.M.Cy.S.Tissa was called to standby, we were all summoned to muster at about 1300 outside the Quartermaster’s Lobby. We were immediately detailed to go to certain areas, with no notice whatsoever. The junior sailors, who lived in the messes, immediately rushed away and collected some belongings. I was living in a married quarter, so I did not find time to do that, and went along in the clothes I was wearing. I just told my wife that I was going on emergency duty and would be gone for some days.

We were packed into two jeeps and big Port (Cargo) Corporation truck that looked like a bus, and sent off to Anuradhapura. Lt.Cdr.J. Jayasooriya, Lt.L.R.Rajasingham and I, with about 30 junior sailors. Lt.Rajasingham and a group of sailors were detailed to remain in Nochichyagama, about 9 sailors and I were to remain in Medawachchiya and Lt. Cdr. Jayasooriya and the rest went to Anuradhapura. We went to the Police Station where I was met by the Sergeant and about 8 P.C.s who greeted us with the news that the S.I., who had been the OIC of the station had abandoned station with his family as soon as things became tough. The P.C.’s families who were living in the married quarters were afraid to live there. In our usual naval style, I had a few words with the D.M.O., Medawachchiya Hospital, and got them all admitted to the ward as patients! We could understand their fear because we were, ourselves in a heightened state of alert as the jungle was in front of us and abandoned land behind.

Our main problem was food. We had to live on old sweets, over-ripe plantains and, as the main diet, rice and pumpkin crushed

and cooked together! I had Rs.200/- given by Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya, but I kept it to buy cigarettes for the men. Only after about four days, a jeep and truck came along and Captain Noel Weerakoon of the Army told me he was taking arms and ammunition to Anuradhapura: I sent word through him to Lt.Cdr. Jayasooriya for food, toilet materials, etc. About 15 minutes later, I heard the sound of gun-fire from the main road to Anuradhapura, not far from the Police Station where we were. I decided to go out to investigate, against the pleas of the Police Sgt. who said that it was the grandchildren of Mr. X, a politician, who were behind the shooting. However, we decided to go in the direction of Rambewa bridge, about two miles away. Arriving there I saw the jeep that Capt. Weerakoon had come in, overturned and hood down in a few feet of water. Ammunition and pouches were all over. I instructed the sailors to make a racket and distract attention, and went down and collected all the ammunition and pouches. On our way back, I noticed a Morris Minor parked in a garden, without wheels. The occupant of the house was a Buddhist Priest who said he had removed the wheels because the insurgents were demanding the vehicle and he had said all his tyres and tubes were worn out. However he agreed to get it going so that we had an emergency vehicle to get a message across to Anuradhapura. I later met the Army truck which had taken Capt. Weerakoon to Anuradhapura. They thanked us for coming to help and I handed over the recovered items to them. Capt. Weerakoon succumbed to his wounds in hospital.

One evening, it was about 18:00 hrs, two well-dressed persons - one in shirt and tie and the other wearing nationals - came into the Station compound and wanted to see me. They said they were the D.M.O. and the Executive Engineer. But the Sgt. whispered that the one in shirt and tie was a Police Constable (Karunaratne) who had got a political promotion to S.I and was the OIC who had abandoned this Station. The other

was a snake-bite specialist! I politely asked them to leave the premises, and they did: but only after I told the S.I. that I would shoot him for abandoning post, leaving the men without leadership. He subsequently reported back to Anuradhapura Police Station where he was placed under arrest. He later went off his mind, was treated in the Mental Hospital, was discharged from the Police and is now supposed to be in Canada!

Another evening, a convoy of jeeps, cars and trucks arrived at about 18:00 hrs. It was the OIC Padaviya Station who had abandoned the Station along with all the Public Servants. I told the young S.I. that I was sorry but that I could not find accommodation for the whole crowd overnight. He then left for Anuradhapura. (Long years later, this particular S.I. was killed when the LTTE attacked and overran Chavakachcheri Police Station.) He handed over to me a JVP suspect whom I locked up, but looked after. When the Navy detachment was withdrawn some days later, I handed him over to the Police Sgt. Some weeks later, when I was at the Habarana detachment, I went to Anuradhapura to collect medical supplies for the maternity ward. I met a few of the P.C.s there who told me they had withdrawn a few days after we left. I inquired about the JVP suspect, and they said they had left him behind and, by the time they went back, **jackals had crept in and eaten him.**

About a week to ten days later, Lt.Cdr.Jayasooriya came back and we all closed shop and returned to Trincomalee. I had not lost a single sailor in our confrontations but had lost a Police Constable, PC Ratnayake, in cross-fire at about 23:00 hrs one night.

On the way back, we saw streamers across the road from Mihintale to Horowapātana, saying **“Api Sadarayen hamuda piligamu”** (We welcome the Services gratefully). At all these places we came un-

der fire from the JVP who were using shot-guns. Ultimately, we had to abandon one jeep, which was damaged. The driver of the vehicle I was in was badly wounded on his ankle. Although we had another capable of driving, A/B (Driver) Jayalath refused to give up but continued to drive up to Trincomalee with his ankle tied up in the banyan which I had worn, without washing for the last week, at least!

At Dockyard gate, we were taken direct to the Dockyard Signal Station and quarantined there as Lt.Cdr. Jayasooriya had contracted Chicken Pox! We were thoroughly de-briefed and I asked NOIC(I), Capt. Asoka de Silva for a drink, mostly for the elderly Security Branch sailors who had gone with me: they had proved very useful because they were used to staying up late into the night in their normal duties. Despite bars being closed during these days, NOIC managed to grant my request. I also believe he was good enough to get me the award of a Commendation.

About a week later, about 30 sailors and I joined Lt. Cdr. F.N.Q. Wickemeratne and Lt. (L) Siriwardena at Habarana detachment. The purpose was to apprehend JVP suspects. We toured all the remote villages in places like Palugaswewa, Dutuwewa, Huruluwewa, Galenbindunuwewa, Ritigala, etc. - more to see those places than anything else. The people were too poor to indulge in subversive activities. By this time, we were getting plenty of sugar, tea, biscuits etc. from Colombo and we used to pack them and distribute them to the villagers. I noticed that, in certain places, both parents had to go to work on the chena where they grew Kurakkan, Mustard and "Batu miris", which they did not have to fertilise. The children would be left alone in the houses **with a Kurumba, or a cooked tortoise as food for two or three children.**

One arrested suspect was kept in the garage of the Habarana Rest House. One day, when I came back from my rounds, I found

him asleep. I asked the SBA to take a look, to find he was dead. I informed the OIC and cross-examined all those I suspected of assaulting him. All denied. So, at about midnight, I armed myself with a gallon of diesoline and ordered all those I suspected of assaulting him to come with me to perform a cremation ceremony at the Illukwela jungle. There were lots of dead branches of trees and logs to make a pyre. We collected a good many and dumped them on the dead suspect, poured the diesoline and lit the fire. Suddenly, all the others jumped up and bolted to the village road, leaving me. I came back to the jeep and went to pick them up. They told me they had all been attacked by "Debaras". (*nasty type of wasp* Ed) The next morning, all had swollen arms and legs. This must have been the revenge of the dead suspect!

(The late Master Chief Petty Officer Jansen was an institution in the Navy. Remembered and highly respected by officers and sailors alike, he was the raconteur extraordinary. When I was collecting naval anecdotes he told me, "Sir, I can tell you yarns, but I am not a writer. Tell you what - I'LL yarn and YOU write! What do you want me to tell?" So we did just that. Thank you, Chief, how we wish we had had more like you. - Somasiri Devendra)



Sinhala women preparing rice for appa/pittu circa 1908. Contrived no doubt, but still charming.

Photo gallery –yesteryear

Book Review

Woolf in Ceylon:

An Imperial Journey in the Shadow of Leonard Woolf, 1904-1911

By Christopher Ondaatje

HarperCollins, 2005; 326 pages; SL Rs. 2,700/=



Towards the end of this unusually hefty (1.7kg) and copiously illustrated book, author Christopher Ondaatje refers to a December 2004 centennial conference held at a Sri Lankan university about Leonard Sidney Woolf's seven years from 1904 to 1911 in Ceylon (since 1972, Sri Lanka). Any academic conference on Woolf held in his native England, Ondaatje adds, would likely contain (at most) a couple of papers about that part of his long career. Yet - *mirabile dictu!* – coincident with *Woolf in Ceylon*'s arrival in bookstores worldwide from Mississauga to Melbourne, a one-day conference took place in October 2005 at Cambridge University devoted *entirely* to that very topic. By all accounts, an array of interesting speakers made it a most successful event, inspired as it was by the recent publication of Australian literary scholar Yasmine Gooneratne's scholarly new edition of Woolf's 1913 novel, *Village in the Jungle*. To add icing to this particular cake, later in 2006 the distinguished biographer Virginia Glendinning will publish her new *Life of Leonard Woolf*, which is expected to give proper emphasis to his abortive, yet deeply formative, early career as a colonial civil servant in Ceylon. A new era, it seems, is dawning for *aficionados* of Leonard Woolf in Sri Lanka!

I referred earlier to *Woolf in Ceylon*'s many illustrations that make up this visual feast offered by the ever-industrious Sir Christopher Ondaatje, a Sri Lanka longtime émigré whose previous publication devoted to his native land was *The Man-Eater of Punanai* (1992). The latest book has over seventy of Ondaatje's own photographs, mostly in colour, of which my personal favourite is a timeless image (at pg. 217) of a half-dozen or so Hambantota salt-collectors whose crystal-white product contrasts starkly with the ochre-coloured earth and deep blue of the distant *lewaya* (lagoon). But the crowning glory of *Woolf in Ceylon* must surely be the forty-plus rare images from the archives of London's Royal Geographic Society, many startlingly sharp, attractively reproduced here in sepia on the book's glossy paper. Of these old archival images, one that I found myself especially drawn back to, time and again, is a double-

page spread (at pages 18-19) of a Sinhalese village group ranging from grey-bearded elders to *podilamay*. Gathered in a semi-circle, they peer straight into the RGS photographer's lens, the older folks' expressions hinting at both polite curiosity and amused fatalism: a moment in time preserved with such disconcerting immediacy that it really does seem that these rustic folk from the Ceylon of 1910 are gazing directly at the modern reader from across the bridge of time. There is special poignancy today in this scene, for it was the descendants of such people who stood in the direct path of the December 26, 2004 tsunami that devastated Sri Lanka's coastline, only weeks after Ondaatje completed his fieldwork for this book.

Christopher Ondaatje applies the same technique in *Woolf in Ceylon* that he has used in his other lavishly-illustrated 'exploration' books published by HarperCollins over the past decade-and-a-half: *Man-Eater of Punanai*, *Journey to the Source of the Nile* and *Sindh Revisited*. First he chooses for himself an expert guide-companion or two – in this case, Dr. Rajpal de Silva and 'Lucky' Senatilleke. 'Raj' de Silva is well known to Lanka-philes around the globe for his magnificent editions of illustrations of colonial Ceylon, and Lucky will be familiar to anyone who has read *Punanai*. After thoroughly boning up on his subject - in this case, apparently reading almost everything written by and about Leonard Woolf – Ondaatje sets out to follow as much as possible in the footsteps of the great man, whether he happens to be an African explorer or (in this case) a junior colonial Ceylon civil servant-turned-critic of imperialism. The end result in *Woolf in Ceylon* is a curious mix of history, biography, autobiography and 'warts and all' commentary on modern Sri Lanka, all presented in a visually attractive package. Personally I found that the book's social commentary (e.g. on Jaffna) tended to ramble on a bit too long, a pity given that the writer is evidently targeting a 'general readership' naturally unfamiliar with the in-depth background. Unfortunately, Ondaatje's writing style often comes across, at least to this reader, as not only lacking 'sparkle' but rather laboured and didactic, especially when he expounds on Sri Lanka's past history. At times, he seems almost to be 'going through the motions' of writing, just to fill up a chapter.

That said, *Woolf in Ceylon* achieves an apotheosis of sorts when the author finally reaches Hambantota District and Yala – Leonard Woolf's never-to-be-forgotten "vast lone and level plain of the low country...the unending jungle which tem-

pered in me the love of silence and loneliness". Notwithstanding his acknowledgement that Woolf "remains to some extent enigmatic" to him, this is the part of the book where Ondaatje seems to really get to grips with his elusive subject, and his emotional engagement infuses his writing style, which noticeably gathers momentum and verve. As *Punanaï* readers will recall, this part of Sri Lanka is also where the young Christopher once explored the dry jungles with his adored but tragically conflicted father, Mervyn Ondaatje, just before fate cruelly separated parent and child forever. There is also an excellent chapter on Woolf's sentimental (and for the most part warmly-received) return visit to the Island in 1960, and his uncomfortable encounter with a 'living ghost' from that earlier time which afterwards led to some heated exchanges in the Colombo press. Earlier chapters carry the reader from Colombo, where the callow intellectual (and self-confessed "very innocent and unconscious imperialist") Leonard Woolf arrived fresh from Cambridge University on December 16, 1904, to his first posting in the searing heat of Jaffna, thence to the cooler (but infinitely stuffier) climes of 'plantocracy' Kandy, before the all-powerful Colonial Secretary Hugh Clifford leapfrogged his precocious protégé into the Assistant Government Agency at remote Hambantota.

Woolf, like his patron Clifford, grew to feel deeply ambivalent over his role as agent of empire. Clifford went on to become Governor of both Ceylon and the Straits Settlements, and died in a mental asylum in 1941. Woolf, on the other hand, gradually exorcised his imperialist demon by first writing a very fine novel, *The Village in the Jungle* (published in 1913), while on a year's leave from Ceylon, then resigning from the colonial service (interestingly, *before* knowing whether Virginia Stephen would agree to marry him), and thereafter successfully reinventing himself as a prolific political writer and scourge of imperialism. Ondaatje does a creditable job of tracing this evolution process during Woolf's sojourn in Ceylon and the years immediately following, including Leonard's untiring efforts in wartime London to help his friends Perera and Jayatilaka lobby for an official enquiry into the appallingly inept handling of the 1915 Ceylon riots.

Woolf talks in his autobiography of how he developed in childhood a "carapace" or tortoise-like shell as a coping device to protect his "naked, tender, shivering soul" from the "outside and

(Continued on page 24)

BOOKSHOP AND WEB RESOURCES

BOOKS/MAPS/COLLECTIBLES

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

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 9807 0079

A Gagggle of Aunts by Srini Peries: Wasala Publications Nugegoda Sri Lanka, 92pp, paperback. Price \$ 15 inc p& h call Srini on 02 9674 7515 or,
email:srini.p@bigpond.com

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.

'Now in reprint! **"Tea, Tytlers and Tribes - An Australian woman's memories of tea planting in Ceylon"** - By Beryl T. Mitchell. 166 pp and 60 photographs. An autobiography you will enjoy. \$30 plus \$5 P&H within Australia. Ph Beryl at (02)97453763
email:berylmitchell@bigpond.com

Please note P&H is within Australia only, overseas postage quoted on request.

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www.lanka.pair.com
www.rootsweb.com [Genealogy]
www.erols.com/arbs [Asian books]

(Continued from page 23)

usually hostile world". A naturally introspective 'lone wolf' who became a successful publisher (resembling Ondaatje in both respects), he was forever acutely aware of his "subjective self" critically observing his "objective self" acting a role. The secret of his resounding outward success as a colonial officer, apart from sheer hard work and intelligence, lay in his ability to play that role, in the process becoming accepted by his colleagues as a "good fellow", but at a psychological cost to himself that left him emotionally distant (through hardly dispassionate) and prone to severe tremors and skin problems all his life. On the other hand, as Ondaatje illustrates, his intensely introspective self enabled him as a novelist to empathetically 'read into' the lives of Asian jungle villagers in a way that no other member of the imperial 'herrenvolk' – including his far more celebrated writer friend Morgan (E.M.) Forster – ever managed. Indeed, as Ondaatje also comments, this very uniqueness surely contributed to the virtual ignoring of *The Village in the Jungle* by the 'enlightened' Bloomsbury Group, and to this day by a largely euro-centric western literary establishment.

Another aspect of his subject's complex character that comes through in Ondaatje's book is Woolf's melancholic streak, leading to near-suicidal depression occasionally during and after his Ceylon stint, and in its more elevated form to a objectively detached, deeply rationalist fatalism that in some ways matched that of his uneducated village neighbours. In his autobiography, Leonard Woolf wrote of his early sense of "profound, passive cosmic despair" at being "powerless in face of a hostile universe". While his letters from Jaffna to his Cambridge friend and fellow-Apostles Society member, Lytton Strachey, should be taken with a pinch of salt as they often strive self-consciously for effect, and contrast greatly with Woolf's octogenarian reminiscences from the vantage point of mature hindsight, they do reveal a deep sense of displacement that never quite left him, even when he hit his stride in lonely Hambantota and began channelling his "psychological insecurity" into relentless '24/7' working days as an A.G.A. administering 100,000 souls. Even within the *milieu* of Bloomsbury, Leonard was an anomaly, with his affinity for the "darkies" so despised by his wife Virginia and many of their 'enlightened' intellectual friends like Lytton Strachey. Like the brilliant Halley's Comet that he watched from the Hambantota shoreline in 1910, Woolf saw himself

merely as "an entity carried along for a brief period in the stream of time, emerging suddenly at a particular moment from darkness and nothingness and shortly to disappear at a particular moment into nothingness and darkness". Yet this was the same Leonard Woolf who could write feelingly to his later-life companion-of-the-heart Trekkie Parsons, two years after Virginia's suicide: "I had thought, and I don't know for how long now, it would be impossible to feel for anyone as I do for you."

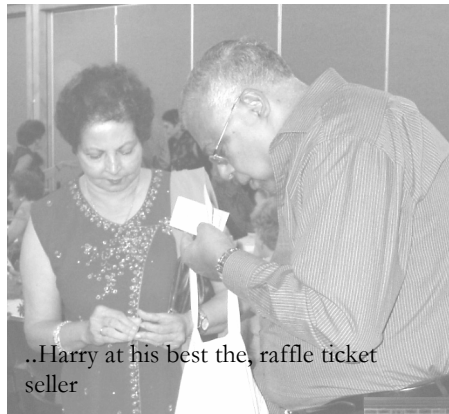
Ultimately, then, like most of us to some degree, Leonard Woolf remains an enigma, as he was a self-declared mystery even to himself during his lifetime. Later in life, he persuaded himself that "anti-imperialism" caused him to give up his promising career in Ceylon. In truth, that came a little later. He even fantasized about spending the rest of his career as a paternalistic ruler of remote Hambantota if Virginia rejected him, even though he claimed sincerely that he disliked being "a ruler of the ruled". As a rigidly strict police magistrate and believer in the autonomous value of truth, he came to believe that the Ceylonese regarded his "justice" as "injustice". Yet (a point not made by Ondaatje) Woolf evidently failed to recognize that for many intelligent Ceylonese, the colonial justice system was both popular and acceptable, in that it was open to covert manipulation, whether by perjury or bribery of minor indigenous officials, in the litigants' eyes an essentially amoral means towards desirable ends they perceived as having a higher social value than the limited value of objective "truth". While it is surely an exaggeration to say, like one academic reviewer quoted on the back dustcover, that the author brings "unmatched insight" to Woolf's career in Ceylon, Ondaatje does bring together a wealth of material obtained from myriad sources, and in doing so has done a service to Sri Lanka, Leonard Woolf scholars and the reading public at large. Warts and all, then, this is definitely a book worth its purchase price.

Joe Simpson, BC, Canada – December 31, 2005

AG M of the Ceylon Society of Australia, followed by dinner and sing along—Sydney 3rd December 2005



..good fellowship



..Harry at his best the raffle ticket seller



Chandra & his collection of animated Santas



...a sumptuous dinner

..and the grand finale,
sing along led by Char-
maine at the piano, with
a lot of audience
participation



See page 30 for the list of elected office bearers

Synopsis of Meetings

Melbourne 6th November 2005.

The Chairman, Dr Srilal Fernando introduced the speaker Dr Ranjith Dayaratne, assistant professor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Bahrain who was currently a visiting research scholar at the Faculty of Architecture, Building & Planning, University of Melbourne. The subject of his presentation was "The Architecture of Geoffrey Bawa - A Poetry of Place." This included an electronic feast of pictures of Bawa's buildings which was a splendid accompaniment to an excellent lecture which was fully appreciated by the audience.

What follows is a synopsis of his lecture:-

"Architecture today, both in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, is in turmoil. More often than not, the buildings create placelessness rather than place and loss of identity rather than authenticity, which are rudimentary needs of building. Geoffrey Bawa was perhaps among the few who were sensitive to such complexities of architecture and attempted to make a change appropriately meaningful specifically in the Sri Lankan context.

When Bawa commenced his practice, there existed architecture in Sri Lanka that had been primarily generated through the wisdom of reverence to Nature and adaptation of natural landscape. Simple yet profoundly poetic, it concretized the humane and interdependent existence of the monks, the peasants and their collective environment. However, at that time, the European dominated architectural practices were reproducing architecture in borrowed colonial styles fused with some decorative devices of classical Sinhalese architecture through buildings such as the Colombo Town Hall that dominate the landscape of Colombo even today.

The construction of the Independence Hall

and the University of Peradeniya clearly demonstrate the way in which the new directions architecture was taking in its pursuance of the cultural revival after independence. Unfortunately, it started with borrowing and replanting elements of ancient Sinhalese architecture such as the moonstones at doorsteps or the ornate flower patterns on walls and columns, from the glorious historical periods of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa.

Geoffrey Bawa did something entirely different. Instead of a surface appraisal, he went to the roots of Sri Lankan Architecture, and fused tradition with modernity to create buildings that were contemporary but were notably culturally rooted. Bawa's architecture takes us far beyond the visual appearance of those buildings or the obvious connections he makes with the sites. In fact, Geoffrey Bawa not only re-discovered the charm and the fascination of the Sri Lankan material culture, he also re-discovered the Sri Lankan spatial spirituality often articulated through the solemnity of the presence and indeed the absence of things at the same time. Overwhelming Buddhist perceptions, values and consciousness had forced abandonment of ornate ostentation that often represents the aesthetic in the modern world to enable the appreciation of the presence of simplicity and absence of things, except that which exists by its very nature.

Heidegger, the phenomenologist and philosopher called such existence 'Poetic dwelling' and Christian Norbert Schultz has argued that the task of architecture is to enable such poetic dwelling. What Bawa had re-collected from traditional Sri Lankan architecture in fact is the power that resided in the Sri Lankan language of architecture to make us 'dwell poetically' and dwelling poetically he did in abundance, often in his remote home at Lunuganga in the solitude of his inner being.

While the language he often used was naturally extracted from the essence of the rural landscape, the peasant houses, the Sinhalese

manor houses or the monasteries and ancient ruins of Sri Lankan history, it is the core of that existence that he regenerates and recreates through the forms and spaces of his architecture. If anything it is that which may continue into the building traditions of the future. It is not so much the language of architecture he employed and clarified through meandering spaces and material outlays, but the deep-seated meditative poetics of spatiality that had evolved naturally in the Sri Lankan landscape and its uncelebrated ancient buildings created by unknown builders. Undeniably, he enriched its articulation through the vocabulary he created and elevated its presence out of the confines of remote rural settings.

Many young architects in Sri Lanka are continuing to re-assemble such spatial poetics through other languages of architecture and there is no doubt that the stage was inspiringly set by Geoffrey Bawa on firm footings."

The question and answer session following this interesting talk were very instructive and furthered understanding of the subject. The meeting ended with the Chairman calling on Mrs Sybil Weeraratne to draw the winning raffle ticket. The prize was won by Therese Raheem.

Shelagh Goonewardene

Meeting to set up a Brisbane Chapter of the Ceylon Society of Australia

Establishment of a Brisbane Chapter of the Ceylon Society of Australia has been on the wish list for a while. Over the years residents in Brisbane and surrounds have been enrolled as members and there was a growing interest to formalise a second group following the success of the Melbourne chapter. Brisbane has contributed to growth of the Society and now counts quite a number

of respected professionals, academics drawn from many disciplines and successful business persons. Ideal source material for another chapter.

In September 2005, due to the initiative of the Treasurer Srikantha Nadarajah first steps towards formation of a Chapter were taken with the help of Fyri Fahir and Sanat Jayasundera. An informal meeting at which there were about 35 interested persons was held at Ithaca Bowls Club, Fulcher Road, Red Hill. Srikantha described to the audience the objects of the Society, and touched on its brief history and growth from small beginnings at a similar informal meeting at the home of its founder president Hugh Karunanayake. CSA now has a membership of over 300 drawn from 6 countries.

Following this introduction, Fyri Fahir, invited Sanat Jayasundera to make a short presentation titled "A brief overview of Ayurveda". A synopsis of this talk appears below. Sanat Jayasundera was followed by Srikantha Nadarajah who delivered a short presentation on Ceylon History - a subject he is well qualified to talk about. Both talks were enthusiastically received by those present.

Following Mr. Nadarajah's presentation, Fyri invited all to stay for morning tea. He also thanked the President of the Ceylon Society of Australia, Mr. Tony Peries and Mr. Davenal Flanderka who kindly donated books as raffle prizes.

There was no doubt among those attending the meeting that the style of meetings conducted by CSA, informative and useful subject matter presented and fellowship enjoyed, set the Society apart from others.

A Chapter in Brisbane has not been established as yet. In the meantime more information from Tony Peries (02) 9674 7515

A brief overview of Ayurveda

The Philosophy of Ayurveda is from a collection of Vedic chronicles. Its macrocosmic/microcosmic inter reactions are a product of Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. Compiled by gurus and sages namely Charaka and Susrutha.

These sciences were compiled by the seers and sages around 4300 years B.C. which was around the time of the Indus River Civilizations which is one of the oldest cultures.

The Cosmic Force and Cosmic Intelligence (Purusha and Prakurthi) are the basic phenomena that are exhibited by anything that is made of atoms and molecules. The behaviour of the subatomic particles influence the creation of atoms of different elements, and this is the basis of atomic theories of today.

All matter in existence, whether living or non-living, are subject to variations brought about by the changes in the macrocosmic forces. This includes the influences of the flora and fauna and the climatic changes and ecological changes. This concept is taken into consideration when an Ayurvedic practitioner diagnoses the root cause of any imbalance in the metabolic systems of the patient. There are three stages of investigations in question

A. The 'Doshas' which are the leading metabolic path ways i.e. Vatha Pita Khappa

B. The three 'Gunas' (types of energy giving systems)

Satvic.....balanced metabolism/philosophical mentality and calmness

Rajastik.....high metabolism
hot/restlessness and impatient

Thmasic.....sluggish metabolism
cold/low esteem/ torpor.

C. The 'Malas' the elimination of dif-

ferent types of toxins and unwanted matters.

The word "Ayurveda" means "Science of Longevity", so therefore it is the integral part of maintenance for a balanced healthy body and mind. Basically, there are five treatments called "Pancha Karma", which the physician uses as a guide in the treatment plan. The sixth, "Raktha Moksha" (Blood Letting), is also included in the Pancha Karma, and is a contribution from the branch of surgery by Srutha.

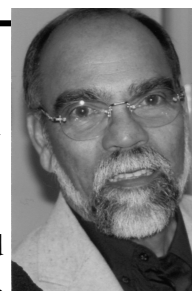
Elimination of toxins and waste is vital and is the branch of medicine called "Mala Shastra". There are five ways of elimination of the waste products. The accumulation of toxins is the primordial cause of imbalances in today's lifestyles due to the universal presence of chemical toxins both in food and in the atmosphere and in contaminated soil and water.

Meet the new Secretary

Doug Jones was elected Secretary of the Society at its recent AGM.

Doug was born in Sri Lanka and educated at St Benedict's College, Kotahena. He worked for some years as a stringer on the daily Sun (of the Dawasa Group of newspapers) reporting on cricket, hockey, tennis, athletics and rugby. He also contributed freelance to Sri Lankan newspapers including the Daily News, The Observer, The Times of Ceylon and the Catholic Messenger where, at various times, he was their Radio Columnist as well as reporting and contributing book and art reviews. Many of his Short Stories were broadcast over Radio Ceylon and published in Sri Lankan newspapers and periodicals.

For 11 years prior to migrating to Australia in 1970, he was employed in the Audit Office in Colombo, where he assisted with preparing and editing the Auditor General's Report to



Parliament.

In Sydney, Doug worked as a journalist for a NSW energy supplier for 23 years and later edited and helped design their publications. Although now retired, he continues to work as editor/layout designer of *Health & Life*, a full-colour lifestyle newsletter for healthcare professionals.

He is a past president and secretary of St Benedict's College OBA (NSW) Branch and their Editor since 1994.

Doug and his wife Hyacinth have three adult children.

Letters

Dear Sir,

As a retired police officer I enjoyed reading Joe Simpson's article on Sir Herbert Dowbiggin (Ceylankan, Journal # 32 of November '05). When I joined the then Ceylon Police in 1957, stories about Sir Herbert were told and retold with awe and veneration by our seniors. If ever there was a problem, the question would be asked, how Sir Herbert would have tackled it. It does not mean however that the wily policemen of Sri Lanka did not outwit him sometimes. Sir Herbert, a confirmed bachelor, lived in the Police Officers Mess even as IGP. Every morning he would walk round the Bambalapitiya police grounds with the groundsman Velu beside him and point out insects shouting 'Poochi, Poochi'. And Velu had to pick them and put them in a jar. Then, Sir Herbert would instruct Velu to go round the grounds and pick all the insects and show the bottle at the end of the day. Velu did this very diligently to Sir Herbert's delight. Most of the officers were puzzled how Velu who spent most of his working hours patronising the 'Kassippu dens' still had the ear of the big boss. With a bit of probing they found Velu had bottles of insects fed and ready in his shanty and took one each day and showed Sir Herbert, thus winning his confidence.

Sidney de Zoysa in his younger days as a trainee is said to have been a handful. The story goes that Sir Herbert, then IGP, was obsessed with the idea that trainees should always read the Departmental Orders at all times and be thoroughly conversant

with it. To him it was the sacred Torah for policeman. Sidney made it a point to let Sir Herbert 'catch' him reading a book on the sly.

Sir Herbert: Good morning Sidney, what are you reading?

Sydney: (Coyly) Just a novel Sir (pretends to hide it).

Sir Herbert; (more curious) plucks the book from Sidney and finds it is the Departmental Orders (Sir Herbert very pleased with Sidney.)

Vama Vamadevan

Dear Hugh,

When you kindly phoned me during your visit to London, I mentioned that BACSA has not for some time been receiving copies of The Ceylankan. To be precise, the last copy we have on file is Aug 2002, though one or two may have slipped through the net. You said that you would reinstate us, and we would certainly appreciate this and also any back copies you can spare. Speaking personally, **I always enjoy reading it, and its absence has left a gap in my life.** Incidentally, I hope that you have been getting copies of our publication 'Chowkidar'.

There has been a bit of a changing of the guard at BACSA. Theon Wilkinson, our founder-Secretary, has retired though he stays on as Project Coordinator. The new Secretary is Rosie Llewellyn-Jones who also edits Chowkidar. Assuming that you want to continue with our reciprocal arrangement, may I suggest that The Ceylankan should be sent direct to me: Henry Brownrigg, 139 Sherbrooke Road, London SW6 7QL, and that any other correspondence should be sent to Rosie. Her address is Dr. R. Llewellyn-Jones, Hon. Sec., British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia, 135 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0AJ.

On a different subject, Shevanthie's book seems in its final stages, and I have been asked to an anniversary party-cum-book launch at Mount Lavinia in July. This sounds like fun, and I will make an overdue tour of Sri Lankan cemeteries during the same visit. Do email me if you are coming to London again, and perhaps we could get together.

Yours,
Henry

A CORDIAL WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS



Ajit Jayatilleke
Whealers Hill VIC

Dudley da Silva
Wattle Grove NSW

Barbara Misso
Box Hill South VIC

Chris Drieberg
Ronville VIC

Vinee and Kamala Abeyagunewardena
Ryde NSW

..who have joined since publication of
Journal 32

...and last but not least...

Fred and Rosemary Kreltszheim
Vermont South VIC

who joined in June 2004 but did not make
the list for some unknown reason. We
apologise for this omission. ..Ed

REMINDER MEMBERSHIP DUES

2006 subscriptions are now due. Kindly draw your
cheque/MO in favour of the Ceylon Society of Aus-
tralia and mail to Srikantha Nadarajah 50A -The Es-
planade - Thornleigh NSW 2120. Please note sub-
scriptions are for a calendar year.

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How to become a member of the Ceylon Society of Australia

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Ph: 02 9980 1701

E-mail: vsnadarajah@bigpond.com

and request an application form

NEXT SYDNEY MEETING

Date: Sunday 5th February 2006

Time: 6.30 p.m

Dr Rajpal De Silva

Author of Maps & Plans of Dutch Ceylon and other Books
will speak on

Dutch Forts of Sri Lanka

Venue: Thornleigh Community Centre
Cnr Phyllis and Centenary Avenue Thornleigh
NSW 2120

Inquiries: Tony 9674 7515 /Hugh 9980 2494

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: Srini.p@bigpond.com

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NEXT MELBOURNE MEETING

Date: Sunday 12th February 2006

Time: 5.30 p. m

Dr Rajpal De Silva

Author of Maps & Plans of Dutch Ceylon and other Books
will speak on

Dutch Forts of Sri Lanka

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

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

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