

# The Ceylankam



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of AUSTRALIA

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## How to become a Member of the CSA

Who can become a member of the CSA? Any person with a common interest relating to the historical heritage of Ceylon/Sri Lanka and wishes to share that interest with like-minded people worldwide is welcome to seek membership. Please contact any of the following for further details:

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Keeping Our Heritage Alive  
The CEYLON SOCIETY  
of Australia

(Founded in 1996)

PO Box 246 Thornleigh NSW 2120

### From the Editor...

Once again we publish a historic sketch and photograph of Colombo Fort (circa 1860) with permission from Palinda de Silva (of Texas, USA). These are unique pieces of art and their clarity of detail are astounding.

The editor is grateful to all our contributors for sending in their work for publication. Please keep them coming. Rest assured, your articles are read avidly by members and others all over the world. Just because your story may not appear straight away in a current issue, it does not mean it is rejected, but simply withheld for future use.

Considerable work and time goes into getting an issue to print. Most of all, our editorial committee sacrifices a lot of time in reading, checking facts and painstakingly correcting them to ensure the journal gets to you as near-perfectly as possible.

### Changes

#### NEW PRESIDENT OF COLOMBO CHAPTER

Somasiri Devendra, Founding President of the Colombo Chapter, formally relinquished his duties (which he undertook to perform for two years) after the September 12 meeting in Colombo. Somasiri will now devote all his energies to finishing two more books and giving "side support" to the new President who is



#### Ms Chulie Kirtisinghe de Silva.

Chulie is currently the Senior External Affairs Officer of the World Bank, Colombo. Prior to that, she worked at the U.S. Embassy in Colombo. Chulie has also worked in a virtual community as Vice President (1999-2001) and President

(2002-2005) of the Lanka Academic Network ([www.lacnet.org](http://www.lacnet.org)) —a period when she focused on popularising use of Internet in Sri Lanka. Chulie is an avid blogger and more about Chulie can be found in her two blogs: "Chuls Bits and Pics" ([chulie.wordpress.com](http://chulie.wordpress.com)) and "Hikkaduwa Chronicles" ([chuls.wordpress.com](http://chuls.wordpress.com)).

In welcoming the new President Somasiri wrote "Thank you, Chulie, for taking over the

You will notice that we are still making minor design and other changes, cosmetic by and large, but changes nevertheless. Changes are part of the growing up process and inevitable. As a dynamic publication, the Journal does call for some fine tuning as we go along.

Beginning with this issue, a series of articles will be featured on life in Ceylon tea plantations. To give it a flying start Noel Young writes on how her life took a turn-around from being a student nurse in Ballarat to a tea planter's wife in Bramley (Ceylon). In "Malgolla to Mysore – Without Regrets" Hugh Karunanayake writes with flair as he gives readers a Cupful of a British family's longest residence in Ceylon. "Memories that linger – Ceylon re-visited" Roger L. Raymond takes us through a nostalgic visit as a nine-year old to the island of his birth. Brian Parker raises a chuckle or two in his light-hearted "Takeda-san gets his own back?" while Stefan D'Silva seeks adventure in attempting to locate vital flight data seven years after a jet crash. The usual features – Synopses of meetings, Nature Notes and a Book review – are all there.

So sit back and enjoy!

reins. I could not think of a better person and I do think that go-ahead younger heads should replace grey heads (what's left to grow grey, anyway!) in all good institutions."

#### NEW TREASURER

A rolling stone all his life, Upali Dharmakirti retired from paid employment at 60 to the Northern Beaches of Sydney with his wife Chandini. They have two grown-up children (Sidath and Shanilka) who also live in Sydney. Upali's hometown is Matale, where his father was a leading lawyer. He attended six different schools (some for very short periods) but identifies himself as a past pupil of Trinity College, Kandy.

His friends consider that he has a lot of time on his hands (although he does not necessarily agree), CSA founder Hugh Karunanayake recently roped him in to be the treasurer of the society. However, outside the CSA, he does have a full life with his meditation and other leisure activities. Now a keen golfer (not a very good one by his own admission) whose only recent claim to fame is a hole-in-one!



(Continued on page 5)



Australian-born NOEL YOUNG was working in London when, to please her father, she agreed to accompany him by sea to Australia for her sister's wedding. That's when her life had a complete turn-around and her world changed diversely ...

## ... as Ballarat is to Bramley

I was born in Ballarat (Victoria) where my father was in a family business. I trained as a nurse at Royal Melbourne hospital and was living in London, working as a nurse, when my sister announced, in 1951, she was getting married. It was not my intention to journey all the way home for the wedding but then my father arrived in London and persuaded me to return with him, with the promise he would pay my fare back to London where I had planned to make my life.

On the ship to Australia I met Bill Young who changed my life and plans, when I agreed to marry him. He was then a tea planter though he

a multi-layered organisation. From the actual growing to the manufacture of tea and the general management through to the hierarchy in Colombo and London, there were daily concerns. Cost of production and tea prices were the topics of conversation with neighbours and friends. I remember in the early fifties, the evolving new ideas of planting on the contour, propagation by cuttings and control of "Blister blight" caused much interest and discussion.

Of course, there was an awareness of the gulf between us and the labour force and particularly, the conditions in which they lived and worked. As a nurse, there was a thought that I may be able to help in some manner but I soon learnt that things operated in a certain way and it was simply too difficult to upset the *status quo*.

I was drawn to the different culture and traditions and delighted to be invited to the many festivals. There were also times when the festival celebrations would come to the bungalow. We would sit on the verandah and watch and listen to dancing, singing and the music. On one memorable occasion in later years, we were visited by an elephant which had been especially brought from Nawalapitiya to carry the Goddess Mari Amma. I still remember the large animal, decorated with garlands and bearing the surprisingly small statue, walking up the drive and arriving in front of the bungalow for us to pay our respects.

All these unexpected events opened a whole different world to me. Being Australian, I was rather a curiosity with no notion of what was expected of being a planter's wife. Other people were kind and full of tactful guidance through a plethora of social and practical skills.

Most of the week was quiet and predictable. For some it could be also an isolated life but the local club provided a social focus. Each week there was a "club day" when all gathered in the afternoon for tennis, bridge and a general reunion of neighbours. Some of the clubs held Tennis

• A planters' bungalow, Haputale (Circa 1890)



had studied Naval Architecture in Portsmouth and worked for the Admiralty in wartime. He was sent to Singapore which fell to the Japanese while his ship was in Bombay, so he was redirected to Colombo which by then had become a strategic port for the Asia Pacific. While there he contracted dengue fever and was sent to a hospital in Diyatalawa to recuperate. He found the upcountry experience a joy, causing him to resign from the Admiralty on his return to the U.K., postwar, where the Central Province Tea Company accepted his application to be a planter. He crept with Bruce Gibbon on Goonambil, in Wategama near Kandy, that estate being a part of the much larger Galphele group. Bruce was kind, generous and an excellent mentor: Bill moved on to Bramley in Maturata where I first lived after our wedding in Holy Trinity Church, Nuwara Eliya.

There were weekly trips to Nuwara Eliya for regular shopping, followed by a visit to the Golf Club for a tasty meal and the exchange of library books.

Apart from my role as bungalow and garden organiser, I naturally became interested in the estate and the planning and problems involved in



Meets, an important and serious annual event when people would gather from near and far for some tennis over a weekend, followed by a certain amount of merry making in the evenings. We looked forward to these meets when we met old friends and a general feeling of good humour prevailed.

In due course our first child was born in the Hatton Nursing Home and I returned home with the baby in a basket. I had no experience of babies but somehow managed with the help of Dr. Spock and advice from friends. Two more children were born and after the third, we moved to Scarborough Estate in Upcot, and years later, to Ingestre Group in Dickoya.

The children tell me they had a happy and interesting life on the estates. It was very simple and for much of the time, they were self-contained in making their own amusement and inventing games. The estate was a veritable wonderland to explore. The Castlereagh Dam was completed while we were in the district. It was only a short distance to a whole new world of sailing and boats and soon the children became expert sailors and opened up a new sport for them to master.

#### **Education a consideration**

Education was always a consideration and we followed the general customs for expatriates. There was early teaching at home, a task for which I was totally unprepared. At the age of seven, they went to the Hill School in Nuwara Eliya and later on to Secondary Schools in Australia.

The family still remembers with nostalgia the wonderful holidays and visits to different parts of the island. There were trips to Yala where we stayed in the Buttawa bungalow, an almost annual visit. As the ocean was nearby, everyone spent lots of time on the beach and returned to view the

wild life in the evenings. What remains in my memory was the unspoiled nature of the park and the quietness and serenity of this holiday above all else.

Another favourite was Trincomalee where we stayed at the Sea Anglers Club and spent days swimming, sailing and fishing. On one occasion I joined six friends in three boats and we set off

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*Nostalgic memories of trips to Yala,  
lots of time on the beach there and,  
of an evening, taking in the wild life  
in the quietness, serenity  
and unspoilt nature of the park*

---

from near Kandy, down the Mahaweli river, sleeping on sandbanks at night and arriving in Trincomalee, a few days later.

Closer to home, there were many things to do, from bird watching to exploring other areas beyond the estate, particularly the Adams Peak region. For several years we climbed the peak, joining the pilgrim path from Moray estate and returning in the morning for breakfast by the stream at Rajamallay estate.

While living in the island one was constantly aware of the rich history and culture and also the remarkable variety and beauty of the place. I enjoyed all of this to the full. However, we were witnessing the passing of an era. Over the years there was a gradual departure of expatriate planters and in early 1970, it seemed that the time had come for us to leave for a new life in Australia.

I have affectionate memories of the many experiences and also an appreciation of the generosity and kindness I always received during what was a very special time of my life. 

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#### **Changes...** (Continued from page 3)

Upali qualified as member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka in 1971. He subsequently became an ACMA (London) and CPA Australia. In a career spanning 37 years, he has worked in three countries (Sri Lanka, Bahrain and Australia) in senior accounting and management roles for 13 employers. He worked in Sri Lanka for three years after qualifying as an accountant, where his longest (two years) and final role was as the Finance Manager of Lankem (then a subsidiary of Shell Chemicals). In Australia he worked in the merchant banking

industry and then for the Federal and NSW governments.

#### **...AND 'THANK YOU' NADA!**

V.S.Nadarajah was Treasurer for four years and has been a CSA member for about ten. An Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers(London), Nada served in senior management levels in the banking industry throughout his career. Current interests include writing on Sri Lanka's banking and business, reading, music and tennis. He will continue to actively support the society in every way he can.



# MALGOLLA TO MYSORE – ‘WITHOUT REGRETS’

by Hugh Karunanayake



Standing on a shelf in my study is a large racing trophy with the inscription “*Madras Races 1939/40 - H.H. the Maharajah of Mysore Cup*”. Inscribed further down is the name of the horse “*Without Regrets*” and that of the jockey *Davison*. The trophy is a handsome piece of silverware measuring 45 cm in height and 45 cm across at the widest section. It was gifted to me some years ago by a friend who possibly thought that this memento of horse racing in Sri Lanka would find a cosy niche among my collection of books and ephemera from Ceylon. He had purchased it at an auction in Colombo but did not know much else of its background. I tried my best to get more information on the trophy, especially the name of the owner and the circumstances in which it came to be auctioned but my efforts were unsuccessful. It continued to rest on my bookshelf with an occasional furtive glance at it by visitors, but with no progress at all on my attempts at research. The stalemate continued until my friend S.Muthiah, former Editor of the Sunday Times and Times Annual, visited me in Sydney a few months ago. He has been domiciled in Madras (Chennai) for the past few decades and is now an authority on the history and heritage of Chennai, so much so that he was awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth II of England for his work.

I showed Muthu the trophy and asked whether he could help me with more information. I could not have found a better resource for the task, as in addition to his encyclopaedic knowledge on Madras and its history, Muthu’s father Mr M. Subbiah at one time owned a string of horses, racing both in Ceylon and in Madras, and was once the winner of the Governor’s Cup in Colombo. Surely, some of the stories of the turf of that era may have rubbed off on Muthu himself? He writes a weekly column for *The Hindu* newspaper called “*Madras Musings*” – something he has been doing for years. On his return to Chennai he asked, through his column, whether his readers could help him with information and the response from his readers was as expected – magnificent. Not only did they provide information on the horse and its owner but also sent newspaper cuttings from 70 years ago, with photographs of the horse being led in by his trainer after winning the His Highness the Maharajah of Mysore Cup. What a discovery! The

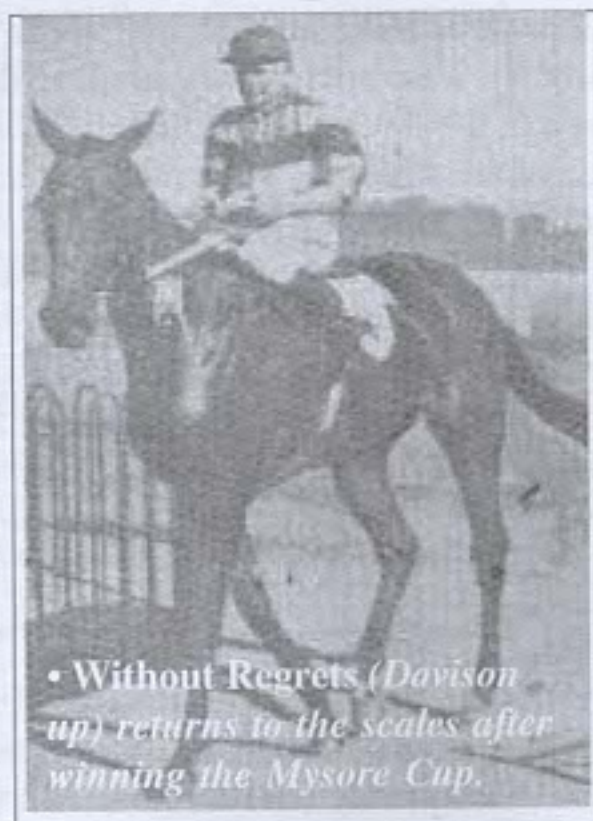
owner was Charles A. Laing, a prominent turfite who figured regularly in the annual lists of the top six winning owners at races in Ceylon during the period 1935 to 1952. He had, through the years, bagged all the possible major trophies awarded for horse racing in Ceylon including the Governor’s Cup (1935), Roberts Cup (1938), Lawyers Cup (1936), Governor’s Bowl (1938), The Maharajah of Mysore Cup 1939/40, The Ceylon Cup (1940), The Madras Cup (1951), The A.E. de Silva Cup (1949), the Galle Cup (1932), the De Soysa Cup (1933) and many others. The names of the 20 racing trophies won by the Laings during the years 1929 to 1951 were later inscribed on to a large silver plate, which was used as a coffee table in their home.

The story of the Laing family in Ceylon begins in the 1830s with the two brothers James and John Laing, from Cults, near Aberdeen, Scotland, migrating to Ceylon. It continued through almost 135 years of residence by four successive generations ending with the departure of Mike Laing and his family in 1974.

The Laing family saga makes fascinating reading, and brings to life, in many ways, the social aspects of the almost forgotten story of the British in Ceylon. It is also the story of plantation development in the island, and the laying

of the foundation of what was later considered to be the “commanding heights” of the economy, viz: the plantation sector.

James Laing worked as the Editor of the *Ceylon Herald*, a government run newspaper which succeeded the *Government Gazette* of the time. He died from spasmodic cholera and was described at the time of his death in Kandy on September 9, 1846 as “a universally esteemed



• *Without Regrets (Davison up) returns to the scales after winning the Mysore Cup.*



member of Society". He died on a property called Parkside in the Kandy area according to J.P. Lewis in *Tombstones and Monuments of Ceylon* (1913). His son James, born in 1825, was the Superintendent of the Bridge of Boats at Kelaniya (the precursor to the Victoria Bridge). He lost his life tragically at the age of 59 trying to save two friends from drowning in the sea near Mount Lavinia on April 3, 1874 and was buried at the General Cemetery, Kanatte.

### *Pioneer family*

John Laing, the founder of the family featured in this story and brother of James (Senior) was a pioneer sugar cane and coffee planter. Governor Edward Barnes encouraged sugar cane cultivation and offered land around the Peradeniya and Gannoruwa areas for this purpose. John Laing planted Peradeniya Estate (300 acres) first in sugar cane and later in coffee. It was part of this estate that was acquired by the Government for the Kandy Golf Links in 1909, and many decades later, for the Peradeniya University. Noting the tremendous opportunities that lay in plantation development he lost no time in purchasing a large tract of land in Dolosbage which was, at the time, a very fertile district, yet unopened and covered mostly by uncleared jungle land. Those were difficult days with hardly any labour to assist and with no physical infrastructure reaching those areas. Life was at its best lived under the most difficult and primitive circumstances. Land had to be cleared of forest, the soil prepared for the planting of coffee, and a homestead established with very basic material to house the pioneer. When developing his properties in Dolosbage he lived in a house named **Bon Accord** (after the motto of the city of Aberdeen) near Katugastota where he reigned with an iron fist. John Laing was known to confiscate cattle that strayed into his property invoking the ire of local villagers, one of whom sought to kill him in 1859 by firing a gun through his drawing room door but missing the intended target. The coffee estates Madoolhena and Malgolla in Dolosbage were planted by him.

Times were tough for the colonist both physically and emotionally. John Stephens (the father-in-law of his son C.A.L. Laing) said on returning to Ceylon after his last visit to England in 1868: "...and here I shall make my last exit—for after many years of hard toil, earning my bread by the sweat of my brow. I shall never see my *ain countrie* again". There was hardly any social or community activities then, although Freemasonry

was active among proprietary planters since 1838 when St John's Lodge was warranted. John Laing was initiated to the St John's Lodge on September 15, 1864 and continued his involvement up to his death.

On the death of John Laing, his son C.A. J. Laing (born in Aberdeen on July 4, 1859) continued to manage the estates. After the coffee blight of the 1870s, the estates were gradually replanted in tea by C.A. J. Laing. Both John and his son C.A. J. Laing lived out their lives in Ceylon and in the process developed their plantations to be very rewarding agricultural



• Charles Laing as Major in the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps in the 1940s.

enterprises. C.A.J. Laing married Gertrude Stephens, also from Dolosbage, on January 10, 1891. Gertrude's father, a champion tennis player, was for some time Superintendent of Mossville. C.A.J. Laing died on July 9, 1913 at the age of 54. He and his father John are said to be interred in graves in the Kandy district, but the exact locations are not known.

C.A.J.'s son Charles A. Laing was the third generation of the family in Ceylon. Born in Nuwara Eliya on January 23, 1892, he had his primary education at St Edwards School in Nuwara Eliya, after which he was sent to Aberdeen Grammar in Scotland for his secondary education. He was 21-years of age when his father

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(Continued from page 7)

died in 1913 and he returned to Ceylon to actively participate in the management of the family estates. His period of ownership and management of the estates could well be called the golden age of the British colonist in Ceylon, an age described by the 'plantation raj' as its halcyon days. By then the foundation of the economy had been transformed from that of traditional agriculture to plantation agriculture. All the hard work involved in the transformation had already been done by the pioneering work of the 19th century planters. In the case of Malgolla and Mossville Estates, the foundation work was already done by the father and grandfather of Charles A. Laing whose pleasant lot was to reap the rewards generously flowing from the labour of his forbears. It certainly could be said that life in the country was, at the beginning of the 20th century, a veritable bed of roses for the colonist. Socially, the country was stable with a highly stratified social system that had the British colonist on top of the pile and the rest accepting the *status quo* without murmur.

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*He managed his estates well and lived the leisurely life of a country squire. His greatest passion, however, was horse racing, and he owned a string of cup-winning horses.*

---

Charles A. Laing managed his estates well and lived the leisurely life of a country squire. On deciding that Ceylon would be his home, he sold off the family estate in Cults near Aberdeen and invested the proceeds on developing his tea estates. He was a Major in the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps and was a good tennis player and marksman with a number of trophies to his credit mainly won at the Dolosbage Tennis Club and the Kotmale Club in Nawalapitiya with which the family had enduring connections. His greatest passion, however, was horse racing, and he owned a string of horses, which, from the 1930s onwards, brought him almost every important racing trophy in Ceylon and South India year after year. During the racing year 1934/35 his stables earned Rs 42,947 in prize money alone. During the war years, horse racing in Colombo was suspended and the racecourse used as an airfield prompting many owners to continue their racing in Madras. Charles A. Laing continued to field his horses in Madras and it was there that his horse "Without Regrets" emerged as a champion.

At the Spring Meeting in Madras held on January 14, 1940, "Without Regrets" ridden by Jockey Davison and trained by G.N.G. Walles won the Maharajah of Mysore Trophy, better known as the Mysore Cup, valued at Rs 500. The owner Charles A. Laing received Rs 4000 in prize money in addition to the trophy. One month later, on March 18, 1940, the horse won the Ceylon Cup presented by the Ceylon Turf Club at the Madras Races for its owner Charles A. Laing bringing in Rs 3000 in prize money and a trophy valued at Rs1000.

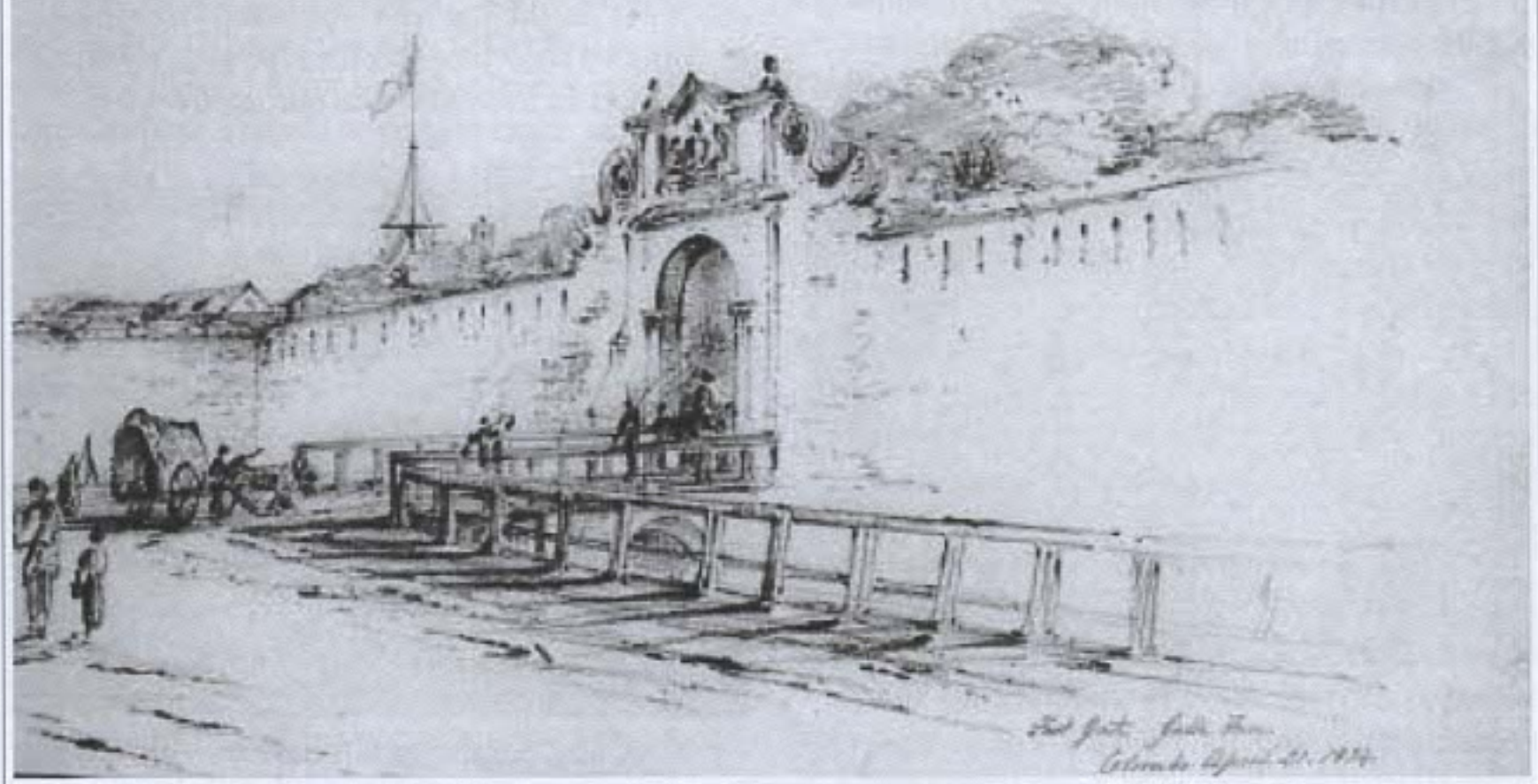
Charles A. Laing married "Micky" in 1945 while they were both in Trincomalee, he with the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps and she with the WRENS during the war. His son Mike Laing representing the fourth generation of the Laing family in Ceylon was born in 1946. By 1952, Charles A. Laing had sold off his string of horses and two years later, stricken with illness, he was admitted to the Joseph Fraser Nursing Home in Colombo where he passed away on October 5, 1954 at the age of 62. The seven-year old Mike was then schooling at the Hill School in Nuwara Eliya. Micky Laing ran the estates through agents until Mike who was sent to Scotland and England for his higher studies returned after his university education to take over the management of the estates in 1968. Mossville was sold to pay off the huge death duties that had arisen, and the family was able to develop Malgolla and to retire Micky Laing to England. On June 22, 1969, 15 years after the death of Charles A. Laing, some chattels belonging to his Estate together with antiques, silver racing trophies, including the Mysore Cup, other sterling silver ware and luxury goods were sold at an Auction held by Schokman and Samarwickrema, Auctioneers in Colombo. It was at this auction that my friend acquired the Mysore Cup which I now possess. With the introduction of the Land Reform Act in 1973, Malgolla Estate was acquired by the Government bringing to an end the unbroken links of the Laing family with their vale of Malgolla in Dolosbage for well nigh 135 years. A sad end, but as Mike Laing would say: "Without Regrets."

With the acquisition of the estate, Mike Laing was faced with the prospect of looking for a new career. He may have observed with some irony the exchange control restrictions of the time which made it difficult for a man whose family had lived and worked for four generations in the island to pay for his air travel back to England. He had to borrow money to purchase the air ticket

(Continued on page 10)



## The Galle Gate of the Dutch Fort of Colombo



**T**his sketch of the Galle Gate (also known as the South Gate) of the Dutch Fort in Colombo drawn by an unknown artist in 1834 is one of a group of drawings which portrayed with almost photographic accuracy the scenery and views of notable buildings and environs around Ceylon in the 1830s. They were compiled into an album by Lady Ann Wilmot Horton, wife of Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton the Governor of Ceylon from 1831 to 1837. Three of the sketches were published in the August 2009 edition of *The Ceylankan* but their existence in the public domain has not been known before. The photograph taken in the 1860s (see back cover) around 30 years after the sketch was made, goes to show the remarkable accuracy and the meticulous draughtsmanship of the sketch. The photograph by S. Slinn and Co. is also a very rare image of outstanding clarity.

The Galle Gate of the Dutch Fort of Colombo stood somewhere near the present roundabout opposite the old House of Representatives building at the northern end of Galle Face Green. Even today the heart of the city of Colombo is known as the "Fort" after the Portuguese and Dutch Forts which existed there since 1518. After the Portuguese Fort was captured by the Dutch in 1656, the fortifications were altered considerably, the Dutch reducing the

size of the Fort to about half of its pre-existing size. There were 11 bastions and three main gates to the Fort, the Delft Gate, the Galle gate to the South, and the Watergate(?) to the North. The images shown here are of the Galle or South Gate which opened into the Middleberg Bastion. All of the fortifications including the ramparts, bastions, and gates (except for a few remnant pieces of rampart) were dismantled by the British between 1869 and 1871. The photograph by Slinn was therefore most timely as the fortifications were dismantled just a few years later.

*(With grateful thanks to Mr Palinda de Silva of Texas, USA, for providing us these images from his collection for publication in The Ceylankan).*

### JOURNAL REPRINTS

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# Memories that linger - Ceylon re-visited

by ROGER L. RAYMOND

**N**ineteen fifty eight was an important year for my sister and I because it was the year that dad and mum decided to return to Ceylon to visit our family. Two fun-filled months on the finest island on God's earth.

But let me start somewhere at the beginning. I came to Australia in 1951 with my mum as a one-year-old baby. In those early days of Burgher migration to Australia, most of the Burgher newcomers stayed in various boarding houses in St Kilda. Remember we were among the first Asians to arrive in Australia after the influx of Chinese with the gold rush era. White Australia Policy was still in existence and enforced. Dad had to prove to the Australian Government through the Australian Embassy in Colombo that at least 70 per cent of our blood was of European stock.

Dad had come to Australia some time before us and we moved in with him at a boarding house in Park Street, St Kilda. My sister Heather was born in St Kilda some two years after we arrived.

By 1958 we had moved to live in 138 Altona Street, West Heidelberg in Victoria, a little street in a Housing Commission area where we lived in a tiny home. My mother continues to live there.

## From Malgolla to Mysore...

*(Continued from page 8)*

to leave the country. There were several old retainers on the estate some of whom had worked through five or six generations on the family property and despite the vicissitudes he faced, Mike Laing was able to fund many of them to travel back to India before the estates were finally taken over.

There ends the story of the Laings and Malgolla, the story of the British family with the longest uninterrupted period of residence in Ceylon. It would have been lost in the mists of bygone days had it not emerged quite serendipitously from a desire to research the background of a nearly forgotten racing trophy.

*(AUTHOR'S NOTE: I thank Mike Laing of Dorset in England, S. Muthiah of Chennai, India, Eileen Hewson from Shropshire, U.K., and Alistair Jackson-Smale in Sydney for their valuable information which helped me in writing this piece for The Ceylankan).*

The trip to Ceylon was a thrilling experience for my sister and me.

Our next-door neighbor, Mrs. Ross, knew about our impending adventures and farewelled us with two large jars of lollies for us to consume somewhere in transit or with our relatives in Ceylon.



• P&O Liner SS Arcadia arrives in Colombo Harbour (1958)

Months before we left the excitement began to build up at home. People we had never heard of before suddenly became our acquaintances, who, soon became such good friends that a knock on the door with a package was a regular occurrence at our home.

## Small treasure chest

Many newer settlers would not know the term 'parcel'. To the early settlers, a parcel received was akin to a small treasure chest. On the outward journey, a parcel would contain such things as clothing, canned foods and rare items that could not be obtained in Ceylon.

On the inward journey to Australia, these parcels came containing such things as curry powders, tea, foodstuff and various artifacts. We have Asian grocery shops in most shopping centres but none existed in the 1950's. So all the curry stuffs were sourced from family in Ceylon.

Can you imagine grandpa, George Raymond not having his curry and rice!

I loved eating the fried breadfruit chips and wood apples that granny sent. Auntie Barbara Layman would send my sister many new dresses that she had made. I sometimes would receive a new shirt.

So we come to the outbound parcels. I remember our lounge room covered with suitcases and trunks, the trunks were essentially obtained to hold the parcels that were to be taken by us aboard ship, the SS Arcadia, a P & O liner.



As the weeks went on, the tappings on the front door became more regular as the cabin trunks began to fill, much to the annoyance of my mother. She began to see the consequences of her generosity. As it happened, the number of trunks grew in proportion to the amount of anxiety.

When we arrived at Port of Melbourne's Station Pier to board the ship, father had to pay porters to carry the trunks and suitcases on board. Large sums of Pounds were paid to the uniformed porters in recognition of their hard work. Remember Australia converted to decimal currency only in 1966.

Once on board, we all settled into our cabin, rather cramped but cosy. Dad, meanwhile, had learnt some very beneficial ground rules for shipboard life.

The first and best of these was the way he worked introducing himself to our steward who was to care for us during the voyage. Dad slipped him a rather substantial financial gift with a wink and nod. The wink turned out to be that my father expected the very best of service which he got and access to all of the fine social activities that took place on the outward journey.

I remember my father had purchased many tins of Hutton hams which came in the shape of a heart. Good Australian ham was required for the coming festive season and neither of these products were considered far too expensive at the time to be purchased nor were they readily available in Colombo. The ham was safely stored away by the steward in some refrigerated area in the ship.

My father was always known for his huge capacity to consume food. He often joked around the dining table that he had the capacity of a large coal wagon which I presume was attached to a large locomotive.

To illustrate this aspect he often told the story of his first wife, Millie Christoffelsz. Early in their marriage, he had cause to stay with his mother-in-law. She had the servants prepare a stringhopper breakfast for the family. George Raymond, her new son-in-law came to the table and, presuming others had eaten, completely finished the food on the table to the horror of his new wife's mother. She had to set about organising the preparation of more food before the rest of the family came down for breakfast.

He adequately displayed a capacity to consume large quantities of food throughout his life, taking particular advantage of the generous supplies provided on board the ship. He boasted of eating every item on the menu much to my

mother's embarrassment. Dad was not one for holding back when it came to food or having fun. Mum was very much more "proper and refined"

Anyway, on board ship we met up with a daughter of Louis Moreno who, I believe, was the famous Spanish bandleader and was well-known in Colombo and played at the Galle Face Hotel in Colombo. The Moreno family were returning to Ceylon after visiting their relatives including



• The Raymond family reunion at 16 Raymond Road, Nugegoda in 1958.

Victor Ebell, Louis's brother-in-law who was a very good ex-army friend of my dad's and lived in Footscray.

This young lady, along with my sister and I had many fun times. We were second class passengers and, strictly speaking, prohibited from stepping foot into the first class domain. Little did they know! We often sneaked into the first class cocktail lounge where we would run around the tables to collect the plastic Neptune forks and anodized aluminum spears bearing the ship's name on the shafts.

I do remember during the voyage that my parents would go full tilt at the ship board entertainment, and one particular evening I recall my mother dressing up as Lady PO (she went with a chamber pot as her head gear) and my father accompanying her to the captain's table.

My first memory of Ceylon took place in the children's dining room on board ship. We knew from the daily ship's progress chart where As the time grew near, we paid more attention to this chart and our sense of anticipation grew.

Standing on deck, I was fascinated to observe the antics of the flying fish and later caught sight of a lone fisherman in his outrigger going about his work far out at sea.

One morning while my sister and I were being waited upon in the children's dining room, our steward said to us both that we were entering Colombo harbour.

*(Continued on page 18)*



## Two Famous Collections of Ceylon Stamps

### – A postscript

by *The Rambler*

**T**he renowned Ceylon stamp collections of Baron Anthony de Worms and Sir Ernest de Silva were featured in the last issue of *The Ceylankan* of August 2009. The outstanding stamp in both collections was a mint specimen of an imperforated four penny dull rose issued in 1857. This stamp was first sold in the De Worms auction of 1938 and bought by Sir Ernest. In the 1959 auction of Sir Ernest De Silva's collection, this stamp was estimated at a price of £900. Fifty years later, this stamp was featured once again as the crown jewel in the Joseph Hackmey collection auctioned in New York on February 18, 2009. The estimated catalogue price was US\$ 200,000. An image of the stamp in colour was featured in the front cover of the de luxe auction catalogue issued by Spink Shreves Galleries, New York, who conducted the auction.

The 64-year-old Joseph Hackmey is one of the world's foremost collectors of fine art, stamps, antiques and rarities. His name is listed in the global 'rich list' among the 300 richest people



alive. He employs a full time curator to maintain his collections, which include priceless paintings of artists such as Van Gogh, Gauguin and other impressionists. He is said to have commenced his Ceylon stamp collection in 1980 and,

over the past 30 years, had built up an award-winning philatelic collection covering many countries. Many of the outstanding stamps in the De Worms and De Silva collections were ultimately acquired by Hackmey. With the disposal of the Hackmey collection, we witness once again a fragmentation of an assiduously gathered repository of philatelic history of Ceylon. Interestingly enough, the only Sri Lankan to possess a collection of Ceylon stamps of international renown was Sir Ernest de Silva, both De Worms and Hackmey being of Jewish ethnicity.

### *Our Readers Write*

#### *Fresh look needed at Constitutional Reform*

Dear Sir,

My wife and I had the pleasure of attending the meeting in Colombo, especially as I was interested in the subject of Constitutional reform, presented by an expert on the subject, Prof. Laxman Marasinghe.

It was a well attended meeting. Audience participation was very good, and several people joined in the discussion that followed. As to be expected, most people in the audience were familiar with the subject and problems involved in introducing such reforms.

The speaker outlined the basis of Constitutional reforms in other parts of the world relating to multicultural societies. Prof. Marasinghe, who is also an advisor to the government on Constitutional reform, supported the position favoured by President Rajapakse in implementing the Thirteenth Amendment together with introduction of a Second Chamber as a solution to alleviating grievances of minorities. He also indicated that composition of the Second

Chamber will include representatives from the Provincial Councils, thereby giving greater recognition to regional interests.

Several respondents from the audience emphasised the need to take a fresh look at such reforms in view of a change in ground realities after the war. They questioned the need for giving autonomy to Provinces as a solution to the minority problem. One speaker said that it could marginalise people in the Provinces from the mainstream of society at a time when there was need for greater commitment by central government to development and uniting all sections of society.

The views expressed by Prof. Marasinghe and the audience at the meeting appear to reflect alternative positions taken by a large majority of people in the country and highlighted the merits and limitations of options available to government in embarking on Constitutional Reform.

*V.S.Nadarajah*

#### **Your views are welcome!**

*If you wish to express a point of view, we invite you to write to us. Please keep letters brief, 400 words preferably. Letters may be edited because of length and/or content.*



# An attempt to recover the missing 'Black Box' and spool of tape containing flight details

*This is a sequel to Sri Lanka's worst international air disaster where the Garuda airliner was lost without trace. STEFAN D'SILVA, who introduced the tragic crash to readers in Journal 46, now relates how he, with two intrepid friends, went looking for the vital flight data.*

In late 1981, seven years after the biggest international air disaster in Sri Lanka and considerable research on the crash, the terrain and some theorising on where the remnants of the black box could have been 'catapulted' to, an attempt to find the black box was put together. In January 1982, a small team of three adventurers led by a local tracker ascended the Seven Virgins Mountains to probe the jungle terrain on the other side of the fourth and fifth mountains. The evidence of a large ravine was thought to be the best place for a search and recovery exercise of the black box and the one missing spool of foil tape that would have contained the relevant flight data and shed some light on events that took place immediately before the crash.

Ever since the crash, the idea of searching for the black box was always on my mind. Being of school-going age in 1974 and not having the resources or the expertise to do anything constructive, I 'shelved' the idea till after our migration to Australia and connected with like minded people. My close friend in Colombo, Ali Moheed, ever ready to test his own mettle on an adventure, provided the link in Colombo for research material. Ali sourced the necessary maps and aerial photographs of the crash area.

The appointed leader of the attempt was ex-Australian Special Air Services (SAS) veteran Adrian Jones. Adrian and I had struck up a close friendship ever since we met when we both applied for jobs as Correctional Officers in 1978. Adrian introduced and challenged me in many activities such as long distance running, rock climbing, map reading, abseiling, and trekking, canoeing and general physical discipline. Adrian was superbly equipped to handle the expedition and had achieved instructor status in highly specialised jungle warfare military units in the world. Both of us were also members of the Specialist Emergency Units Response Squads in the Correctional System in NSW. The other member of the team was Bill Mitchell, another

Correctional Officer and an extremely fit, tough individual. He was also one of those who enjoyed all the challenges that Adrian placed before him. While they had access to aerial maps, the official report and other material, none of them had actually been in the Peak Wilderness terrain of Sri Lanka before. Adrian was the sole member of the team who had extensive experience in navigating and surviving in dense tropical jungles acquired during combat in Vietnam and on the superb survival courses afforded to the Australian SAS.



• *Stefan negotiates a steep climb with the aid of a staff to maintain balance.*

Our neighbour at the time worked for Qantas as an engineer and he arranged for me to visit the Qantas Jet Base in NSW and speak to the engineers about various characteristics of the DC8 aircraft and the Lockheed 109C Flight Recorder. I was thrilled when they were able to give me a sample spool of the tape from the 109C Model Flight Recorder; I now had a clear idea of what to look for. The engineers and other staff were marvellous in their support of the planned expedition. As members of the aviation industry, they all shared in the quest for the truth.

*(Continued on page 14)*



(from page 13)

After much discussion and examination of maps and other material, the team speculated that the tail end of the aircraft where the black box was placed, may have catapulted over the ridge of the fifth mountain into a large ravine. Judging from the maps and aerial photographs, that ravine was shrouded in thick jungle and had steep rocky slopes. The slopes were dotted with crevices and ledges. It may well have been that the missing spool of tape lay on the walls of that ravine (if not down in the thick jungle).

*"Oh! For the existence of "Google Earth" at that time, or the wide storehouse of research material that is available today on the internet! But there was none of that during that era. What we had was what we had,"* I said aloud, to no one in particular.

There was a serious rock climbing/abseiling aspect to any attempt to search the rock face and descend into the ravine behind the fourth and fifth mountains of the *Seven Virgins*. Thus, a lot of the preparation involved climbing various graded climbs in the Blue Mountains area of NSW. Familiarisation with the basic equipment of climbers was very much a part of the preparation. Getting familiar with accepted climbing distress signals and roping techniques was also a part of the preparation. All of the above knowledge without an above average level of physical fitness would be fruitless in this adventure.

#### **Opportunity for test**

The opportunity to test the team's skills presented itself on Sunday August 9, 1981 when a Cessna 210 aircraft disappeared in the vast rugged mountainous terrain of the Barrington Tops National Park in New South Wales (NSW). The Cessna VH-MDX left Coolangatta, Queensland en route to Bankstown Airport NSW; about 7.37 PM it recorded its last message in severe turbulence and disappeared with five men on board, including the pilot a Mr. Hutchins.

A few months after the Cessna crash and after all official searches had been called off, Adrian, Bill and I took time off work and headed into Barrington Tops National Park. We had followed the newspaper articles on the search operations that followed the Cessna's disappearance. It was anybody's guess as to where the plane might have crashed and any area that was not searched was open to exploration. The terrain, altitude and mystery surrounding the disappearance had many similarities with the crash of the DC8 PH MBH in far off Sri Lanka.

#### **First 'hiccup'**

Three to four weeks before the Barrington Tops exploration, Adrian suffered a climbing accident in the Blue Mountains National Park in NSW and hurt the bones in his shoulder and hip. He was very lucky not to suffer more serious injuries from his mishap on a difficult climb. As a result, he could only direct and plan the daily searches for Bill and myself from a base camp in Barrington Tops. Typical of the mentally tough person that Adrian was, cancelling the trip was not an option for him. While the searches proved fruitless, the experience of map reading in almost impenetrable forests, and trudging through very rugged, steep terrain over a number of days was great preparation for the trip into the *Seven Virgins*.

#### **'Second hiccup'**

The second hiccup was by far the most impacting on the plans to explore the *Seven Virgins* and that changed the entire objective of the expedition. About one month from the date of departure to Sri Lanka, Adrian's *de facto* partner was diagnosed with a serious illness and she was scheduled for surgery. There was no option, Adrian would have to pull out of the expedition. That was a major blow to the whole team since the expertise to climb or descend into the unexplored ravine required a good lead climber. None of the others had the experience or the qualifications possessed by Adrian to lead the climb. This in effect crippled the venture into the ravine. However, plans were too far gone and with Adrian's insistence, the trip had to go on, albeit, as a reconnaissance trip for a second attempt at a later date with Adrian in the lead.

Although there could be no serious climbing or cliff face descent, the team would take the equipment they needed in case the terrain allowed a grade of climbing that was within their level of expertise. They would not know what was possible till they had ascended the fourth and fifth mountains and scoped the terrain beyond. Safety was paramount as no specialised mountain rescue teams existed in Sri Lanka at that time. Any evacuation from the mountains would not be possible if a serious climbing mishap took place.

Adrian's absence also meant that Ali Moheed would not get the expert level of basic training in roping and abseiling that was required before the trip commenced. It was left to Bill and myself to give Ali a "crash course" in the basics of climbing and in the use of equipment. I had Ali abseiling off the balcony of his house in the



middle of Colombo (to the raised eyebrows of his parents). Ali also had to grasp very quickly the different types of ropes that may have to come into use, how to fit a climbing harness and be the 'break man' (the person at the bottom of the rope – on the ground – as a safety measure to stop rapid or uncontrolled descent of the person coming down). However, the knowledge and skill of Adrian could not be matched by either Bill or myself.

### The ascent and search

Fortunately, Ali's relative Izwan Omar was managing a Tea Plantation on a nearby estate and he generously agreed to put the team up at his residence. Izwan's residence became the 'base' for the search party. A day was spent visiting the foot of the *Seven Virgins* and early the next day Ali, Bill and I were dropped off at the foot of the mountains to commence the ascent. Two local trackers were hired to lead the three men.

Local folk were familiar with the footpaths that led up the mountains and there is no doubt that they occasionally went into the mountains to shoot wild boar and procure bush meat. While it was widely acknowledged that the *Seven Virgins* was virtually an unexplored area at the time, Ali and I had no doubt that the local villagers had been entering the forest over the years to hunt. One of the trackers carried a machete and a pruning knife while the other carried a 12-bore shot gun and a "sawn off" 12-bore shot gun (ie. where the long barrel of the gun is cut off close to the handgrip). The pruning knives are used widely by tea estate workers to prune tea bushes and they are very sharp edged. The team did not question the carriage of the guns as the local folk knew their local jungle best. Furthermore Ali, Bill and I had experience with shot guns and other weapons in the past and were familiar with safety protocols regarding their carriage and use.

The ascent was steep and the tracker made frequent use of the machete he wielded to cut a path for the others to follow and if necessary, the pruning knife was used to cut through thicker saplings. At times, the team had to grab available grasses or young shoots to haul themselves up. At other times, the ascent was made in a 'ziz-zag' fashion to navigate the steep incline. The team had made a miscalculation in terms of water available from natural streams and springs on the mountain. What was not factored in the planning was that the region was in the grip of an extended dry spell, unusual for that part of the country. It

was a long and hard climb, with each of us team members carrying heavy packs with climbing gear and some food rations. Two to three stops were taken during the ascent to have a sip of the little water we were carrying. It was unusually hot for that elevation. As I recall, the higher we climbed, the forest showed more scars of the crash. The trees were all young saplings and the whole area bore signs of the searing fire that had engulfed the



• Bill Mitchell and Ali Moheed with an aircraft tyre they located on the way down.

mountain top after the crash. It was unusually quiet and lacked the birdcalls and other cheerful noises that characterise all the jungles of Sri Lanka. It was eerie.

The greatest surprise was the pungent odour that is popularly associated with the presence of the deadly *Tic Polonga*, or the Sri Lankan Russells Viper - a very poisonous snake. The smell was strong and was experienced at many intervals during the ascent. The team had to keep a wary eye out for this snake or even any movement in the dry grass and leaves as they entered the jungle. There was no anti-venom (of any sort) with the team. In retrospect, this could be considered the second miscalculation in the planning and preparation for the journey into the jungle. Looking back, Ali and I now wonder if that is why one of the trackers wore knee high gum boots on the journey. They were certainly not the most appropriate, snug footwear that one wears for a steep climb. He never took them off at anytime!

Small pieces of debris from the aircraft was still scattered about the place and I collected a

(Continued on page 16)



(Continued from page 15)

piece of fibreglass about the size of a credit card that I kept in my wallet for many years afterwards.

The lack of water was a problem. Bill ingeniously constructed a water collection system with an empty plastic water bottle by propping the bottle on some sticks to catch dripping water from some moss in the crack of a rocky outcrop. It was assumed the drop-by-drop collection of water overnight would provide some water for the following day. After setting up the "water trap" the team traversed the top of the mountain exploring and probing the mountaintop. One particular point gave possible access into the ravine. Bill made an attempt to lead a descent, but we soon realised that without an expert lead climber the task was not possible.

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*A charred and twisted slipper  
was the only grizzly reminder  
of the human tragedy  
on that fatal flight.*

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Among the scattered bits of wreckage was evidence of the human tragedy as well. A charred and twisted slipper bore testimony to the people who had been on that fatal flight. A few bits of burnt shreds of tattered cloth hung limply on some of the burnt tree stumps (surprisingly, after all the time that had elapsed). Also apparent was the lack of reasonably large pieces of aircraft or metal or other debris. The impact must have been devastatingly powerful. The hostile terrain and steep ascent would not have made it possible for large pieces to be carried easily down by any one. One could only stand in the midst of the site and ponder the huge explosion that must have taken place. A sad place overall.

As dusk approached we selected a camp site close to the water collection system we had set up earlier in the day and the tracker set about building an elevated platform from saplings using the pruning knife to its full potential and the machete to strip the leaves of the stout saplings. In about half an hour he had constructed a platform about one metre off the ground for Ali and myself to sleep on. Bill was to use a hammock strung up between two young trees. All of them later realised why the tracker had chosen to build the team such an 'elevated bed' for the night. Watching the sun set across the Peak Wilderness, from that elevation with a hot cup of tea in hand was a most relaxing and restful end to a tiring day for all.

A hot meal of tinned food followed by some more sweet tea was a welcome treat by the flickering fire. The night however, was to be an eventful one. The trackers stretched out for the night on a cloth, on the ground and one of them stretched out with his machete clutched in his hand. An hour or so after all had settled down to get some sleep he half sat up and slashed at the ground in line with his shoulder with the machete...then he held up a young, dead *Tic Polonga* draped over the blade which he flicked into the bushes at the edge of the campsite. The pungent odour was back again! Some time later he repeated the action and another young viper is flicked with the machete blade into the bushes. By that time, Ali and I were wide awake for the rest of the night, ears straining for the slightest rustle in the dry leaves below. The fire was also kept well stoked and in retrospect, that might have been the very attraction for the juvenile vipers during the chill of the mountain night.

Sunrise at that elevation is always spectacular. A hot cup of tea made with the little water collected overnight put the energy back in us all. The scenery was breathtaking and we could oversee the large ravine carpeted in thick jungle and the sheer walls of the ravine on the other side. It was generally agreed that two entry points down into the ravine was possible from where we were and this was logged on for the next time.

It was only left for the team to have a general scan of the mountain tops to gain good knowledge of the terrain and at a future date, to descend the mountain via another route. The rest of the morning evidenced more of the scarred and burnt landscape and the eerie stillness of the young silent forest weighed heavily in the air. Perhaps it was the lack of any proper vegetation, flowers and fruit trees that kept the birdlife away. An interesting discovery was evidence of local poaching and an illegal logging camp (according to the trackers). A 'rack' of sticks in the logging camp indicated that poached bush meat had been dried for consumption or was going for sale.

The descent was very steep and Bill took a fall tumbling about 15 metres through the matted jungle. He suffered a gash to his cheek, nothing that could not be washed with antiseptic and left to dry. The greatest risk was being bitten by a viper during the tumble.

On the way down the team came across an aircraft tyre. Badly damaged and torn, it was a sad moment again for the team. At the bottom of the mountains, the team visited and paid their respects





## Meals Ammi Made

### POTATO ROTTI by Sunethra Nadarajah

½ lb potatoes  
½ lb flour  
½ tsp salt or salt to taste  
¼ tsp chilli powder  
Pat of butter or ghee and water for mixing.  
Boil and mash potatoes. Mix in the chilli powder and half quantity of salt. Make mixture into fair sized balls - approximately 6. Mix flour with

remaining salt and water to make a soft dough. Knead flour till it comes away clean from sides of bowl. Make this dough into balls slightly smaller than potato balls. It is necessary to have equal number of balls. Flatten each ball of dough and cover each potato ball, sealing well all around. On a floured board, flatten each of them into a rotti about ¼ inch thick, taking care that the potato does not come out from covering of dough. Melt a tsp of butter in a frying pan and fry each rotti on both sides or cook them on a rotti pan or hot a griddle.

#### Recipes WANTED

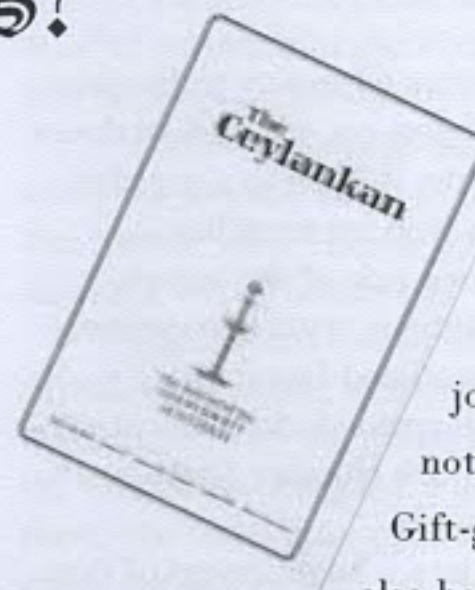
Your favourite recipes of Sri Lankan origin are required for this column. Share them with our readers. Email the editor with those mouth-watering recipes.

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**Give this some serious thought.**

### Attempting to recover the 'Black Box'... (from page 16)

at a memorial erected by the Indonesian Government to the crash victims.

The trip had not been successful in terms of actually finding anything of importance or penetrating the ravine however, it had proved very valuable in gathering first hand knowledge of the terrain and the type of rock face that could be climbed on the next trip with a proper lead climber.

Not long after Ali, Bill and I climbed the *Seven Virgins*, a Sri Lankan military team visited the area on a military exercise and things changed

in the country after the infamous 1983 civilian riots. The *Seven Virgins* became a testing ground for many of the specialised military units thereafter. The return of trio of climbers to the *Seven Virgins* had to be adjourned, for the time being at least.



#### Literary contributions wanted

The editor welcomes original (preferably previously unpublished) articles of an anecdotal, historical nature relating to Sri Lanka's post-medieval periods and must be non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial for publication in *The Ceylankan*. Articles must be 1500 to 2000 words in length. Longer articles are also welcome and will be considered for publication.



*(Continued from page 10)*

I don't know what came over me as I was a well-behaved boy but I took it upon myself to stand on my chair and gaze out the porthole. What I saw was a lovely green lawn, the area around which I can still picture a red double-decker bus negotiating a roundabout. Shortly after breakfast, we returned to our cabin.

Mum and dad were getting ready for the onslaught of our relatives.

Some time later as the ship anchored in the harbour, my father became rather anxious that no one had yet made their way to the cabin. He took me and went to the forward deck to look longingly for our relatives. We did not find them, so we both turned around and returned to the cabin. Approaching the cabin, we could hear a lot of excited conversation and crying. As a young boy of nine I was rather mystified. I thought reunions were supposed to be happy occasions with plenty of laughter and cheer. My granny in particular was in tears, as were many of my aunts. The emotion of seeing their loved ones again was naturally so intense that they broke down and cried.

Eventually, the tears gave way to laughter and amid animated discussions, we walked down a ladder by the side of the ship on to a wooden platform and then in to wooden launches. I remember sitting on one side of the launch gazing across at my relatives, trying desperately to retain names and associated faces.

My uncle, John Raymond, drove us to my granny's home in his Black Humber Snipe to 16 Raymond Road, Nugegoda.

Here we settled into a huge spread of rice and curry and all the yummy things that go with it. The meal had been prepared by the servants in my granny's employ.

Later, as Heather and I became more familiar with our cousins, we would await their return from school. We would go to the lower section of granny's property, which was very large, and play among the coconut trees. Being unfamiliar with wildlife, I was fascinated with the antics of the little squirrels who would entertain me with their constant escapades among the many coconut trees.

1958 was the time of the hula hoop and pogo stick craze. Someone got Christmas gifts of both and much fun was had in fooling around with them.

Granny took Heather and I to a toy shop in the Pettah. I remember having a choice between a hand held battery-operated helicopter that did

actually fly by wire or a 4-propeller Pan Am airplane. I chose the latter.

What fun I had letting the plane move up and down granny's long veranda. The front of each of the four prop engines lit up red while the props rotated. Quite simple fun given the darkness one experienced then in Nugegoda. To this day Christabel Raymond has my plane in her wardrobe.

### *Christmas visits*

Christmas in those days was a time to visit friends and relatives. Most often, I would receive a box of crackers. I accumulated quite a few boxes. One evening Uncle Dick (Richard Raymond) suggested it was time to have a fireworks show.



To make things more efficient, I decided to open each box of crackers and consolidate them in one big box. Good idea. Every good idea has a drawback. Being so dark and no external lighting near the driveway, I set about lighting a sparkler to help with illumination and cracker selection. Little did I know that a spark from one of the sparklers had made it to the large cracker box. It duly took light and all attempts to extinguish the flame failed with the consequential eruption of crackers and assorted fireworks going off. It was a spectacular sight and a vision never to be forgotten.

The period of two months spent by me in Ceylon was the happiest time of my life, memories of which have sustained me through the ensuing years. A cherished time of fun filled activity and adventure taking in the wonderful sights and smells of the greatest island on God's planet.

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### **CSA Annual General Meeting and Dinner**

Sunday November 22 at 7.00 PM  
See Inside Back Cover for details

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*A red-faced BRIAN PARKER  
discovers that many Japanese  
restaurants have unisex toilets as his  
host/companion...*

**P**reviously I have mentioned that my second career, after planting, was selling advertising features into the various Fairfax journals, Sydney Morning Herald, The Financial Review, Business Review Weekly and others.

Nikkei International were Fairfax's Agents and Representatives in Japan. Not only did they arrange all the appointments, they even felt obliged to look after their visitors over the weekends too. The 'Fairfax Desk' was run by a senior executive, Mr. Yuji Takeda.


On my second visit, I had expressed a desire to go to Yokohama, specifically to the docks. Mr. Takeda, who was far too polite to ask exactly why I wanted to go to such a dull location, said: "After you have seen what you want to see, we will have a meal at a very good restaurant, I know, in Chinatown, there."

This suited him fine as he was particularly partial to Szechwan seafood and beef in black bean sauce, in fact, anything Chinese.

So, why Yokohama Docks? When I was 12, I was given a novel called "The Golden Gleaner". It was a story about a cargo ship, of that name, and all the adventures that the crew got up to as the ship sailed from one exotic port to another. The book was written in early 1930s and was definitely not politically correct in any way. It glorified the ways of the Brits, over the trickery of wily Orientals, 'Diegos', 'Wops' and other assorted nationalities. It was very much in the Biggles mode and would not be written, published or on sale in these more enlightened days. They were exciting yarns for a 12-year old, nevertheless. One particular chapter dealt with the dastardly deeds of the 'Jap Yakusa' when the Golden Gleaner docked at Yokohama.

I must stress here that the sentiments of the book were not mine, it was just that by going to Yokohama docks it would take me back to the time when I was 12-years old and those happy days and memories before I was packed off to school in England.

Unfortunately, by 1988, the docks at Yokohama were virtually non-existent as everything had become containerised and those facilities were across the other side of Tokyo Bay. However, there was just one dock left where small

...Takeda-san gets  
his own back? 

tramp steamers and other non-container ships could tie up. When we arrived, Takeda took me to the waterfront less than 100 yards from the dock. He bowed and gestured. "The Yokohama dock, Parker-san," He then stood back and waited and waited.

Despite the fact that there was only one dirty, rusty little tramp steamer along side, I was able to think about those wonderful times of my childhood on Deaculla Estate, Bandarawella. I had lost track of time with my thoughts until I heard Takeda politely clear his throat to attract my attention. "What are we looking at, Parker-san?"

"The whole thing, Takeda-san." I replied. "Anyway I have seen enough now. Let's go and attack some Chop Suey!"

I suppose the good man just put it down as another example of the eccentricities of the inscrutable Occidental.

Half way through the meal, which was every bit as good as I was promised, I asked where the 'Gents' was. Takeda pointed to a green sign at the back of the restaurant.

There were two rooms; the outer had a urinal, wash basin, mirror etc. that led into the inner room with the toilet; nothing unusual. As the toilet was occupied, I used the urinal. While there, the toilet door opened and a young woman came out and proceeded to wash her hands, then check her makeup and hair in the mirror, just behind me.

'Omigod! I've walked into the Ladies!' I thought. Takeda-san must have played a trick on me for giving him such a dull afternoon.

I was so embarrassed I just froze until she had gone. My embarrassment also clouded my thinking as to why there should be a urinal in the Ladies. As I was leaving, another young woman started to come in. I stood back to allow her to pass, she smiled and thanked me, seemingly unalarmed by my presence in the Ladies.

When I got back to the table, I told Takeda-san that I would pay him back in due course. He just laughed and told me that most toilets in restaurants were unisex.





MICHAEL ROBERTS *concludes his analysis of ...*

## ...Extreme prejudice shown by cricket fans & commentators

**A**n abiding feature of the cyber-world debates has been the tendency to emphasise the raw averages of middle-order batsmen over one series or over the last couple of years and to compound this gross evaluation by failing to undertake a case by case review of the matches in the immediate past and the circumstances bearing on performances. It is no accident, then, that such middle-order batsmen as Arnold and Dilshan have suffered at the hands of these gross evaluations and been among those at the receiving end of prejudice. Let me illustrate my contention by dwelling on specific examples of biased assessment during the recent past.

### *Arnold victimised*

Russel Arnold (who retired from Sri Lankan cricket in 2007) was hardly an elegant batsman and this may be one reason why he won so little favour in some cyber-net circles. But he was a team player to the core and an effective batsman in the difficult situation of the middle-order. Thus, his career One Day International (ODI) statistics read as follows: 155 innings, 43 not outs, 3950 runs, **35.26 average** with 28 fifties and a strike rate (s/r) of **72.55** – statistics that are roughly on par with those of Paul Collingwood for England (average. 35.13; s/r 76.31). Note that Collingwood's 24 fifties were compiled in 14.9% of his innings as against the 18% registered by Arnold (28 fifties). Further comparative light is provided when we look at the statistics for Hashan Tillakaratne: 168 inns, 40 not outs, 3789 runs, average of 29.60 and a strike rate of 57.56, with 13 fifties, that is over 50 in 7.7% of his innings.

Pronounced antipathy to Arnold was revealed within the Dilmah site during the triangular series in Australia with South Africa and Australia in early 2006. There were nine league matches played by Sri Lanka and many of the voices hostile to Arnold were in agreement with the selectors (headed then by Lalith Kaluperuma) when he was – absurdly in my view – dropped from the team in favour of Mubarak and Kapugedera for the crucial game at Bellerive against the South Africans. These antipathetic voices had been vociferous for a while, but

Arnold's importance was stoutly argued for by one bloke called Roberts and two other chaps, a Lankan named Crossing Dili and an Australian writing under the pseudonym "Leopard."

When Sri Lanka won that game at Bellerive and entered the finals (against most Aussie expectations), Arnold was returned to the XI for all three games in place of Mubarak. Sent in at No. 5 rather than No. 6 he made scores of 24, 64 n/o, and 76 — so that his series statistics were boosted and read as follows: 10 inns, 4 not outs, 321 runs, **53.50 average** [s/r not indicated in my source]. Compare this set of numbers with those for relevant others during the same series: Kapugedera: 5 inns, zero n/o; 73 runs; 14.60 average; Mubarak (whose position in the order varied): 8 inns, zero n/o; 20.25 average; Dilshan: 11 inns, 2 n/o; 277 runs, 30.77 average.

### *Extra value as a bowler*

It is because of his immense value to the side in this particular series (and his extra value as occasional bowler) that Arnold was a permanent member of the playing XI during the World Cup in the Caribbean – leaving no space for Atapattu [who was actually displaced by Tharanga and Chamara Silva in Atapattu's favoured positions]. However, the persisting bias against Arnold was revealed during the middle of this series when one regular Dilmah contributor, an engineer working in the Gulf States, asserted that Arnold should be dropped from the playing XI. Now, in the early matches Sri Lanka piled up high scores and because Arnold was slotted in at No. 7 (and once even at No. 8), he came in at the tail end of most innings. So his statistics in serial order read thus (with number of balls faced within brackets and an asterisk indicating "not out"): 03\*(4), 05\*(5), 19\*(13), 04\*(4), 20(22), d-n-b, 03(10) prior to the finals. The strike-rate is good and it is not till the seventh match that he records a failure. This suggests that Engineer S was (is) rather dim, or that he was impelled by some deep-seated prejudice hidden from our view.

### *Kulasekera victimized*

Kulasekera came into my radar screen during the tours of New Zealand and Australia in 2005/06. His pitch-cluster map was quite impressive on occasions. Moreover, as Hathurusinghe told me



recently, he is an "intelligent bowler." But Kulasekera bowls at military medium pace and though he can make the ball skid and has some nip, his pace does not consistently enter the 130-135 speed mark. This seems to be the reason why he is treated dismissively by some cyber-net pundits, who favour bowlers with greater speed, such as Welagedera and Thilina Thushara among the newcomers. Thus, several voices indulging in selections of the ODI Squad for the series against India in 2008 excluded Kulasekera from the list despite previous ODI performances of a useful character in the Caribbean and Australia (though not in the Asia Cup in Pakistan).

Earlier, when the ODI Squad for Australia was announced in January 2008 Mister Insistent laughed sarcastically and remarked that Kulasekera would enjoy a holiday as he was of little use and would be little used.

I thought otherwise then because there are certain pitch conditions where a steady seam bowler of the Bedser-Shackleton-Alderman mould is more dangerous than a speedster such as Freddie Trueman or Brett Lee. Squads require a balance and a mix of pace bowlers. Events proved me correct: within the limited opportunities provided, and selected only in three matches, Kulasekera had statistics of 26 overs-3 mdns-129 runs and 5 wkts, giving him an average of 17.35 and s/r of 21.00, both way superior to all the other Lankan pacemen; while his economy rate was on par with the others. Overall, of course, his figures are not earth-shattering, but the best from among a mediocre cluster of achievements.

Add to this two other points: Kulasekera can bat better than most of the other pacemen except for the bowling allrounder Maharoof (and perhaps Thushara and Dhammika Prasad). He is also quick around the paddock, as quick as Malinga and Prasad. Overall he is probably the most athletic and reliable of our pacemen in the fielding department. I witnessed his catching of Gambhir during the recent Test Match at the SSC and reckon that none of our pacemen, other than possibly Malinga or Prasad, would have reached the ball and taken it so neatly — on the run stooping. Such capacities are important to a side.

ODI cricket has evolved to a point where a side cannot have a lumbering bowler (e.g. Nuwan de Zoysa) who leaks runs as a fielder. As it is, Sri Lanka has a problem when both Maharoof and Dilhara Fernando are in the playing XI: although possessing safe hands, they are not agile. During the ODI match at the MCG on February 22,

2008 (watched in person by me) when Australia was in trouble at 4 for 54 on a two-paced pitch, Hussey and Clarke scampered the total upwards to 184 runs by exploiting the limited cricket-quickness displayed by Maharoof, Vaas, Dilruwan Perera and Ishara Amerasinghe in particular. The extra 10-to-15 runs they gleaned added another mountain in front of the SL batsmen in a game where the run-rate came into play because of impending rain.

### *Dilshan victimized*

Tillakaratne Dilshan, the Tuan Mohamed Dilshan of yesteryear, has an unenviable history. He has been subject to rank prejudice from both Chairman Ashantha de Mel and a body of voices within the Dilmah site (though he also has some who stand by his worth). On one occasion de Mel decided that new blood must be injected into the leading XV and dropped Dilshan so as to accommodate Mubarak in the touring squad to Pakistan — much to the chagrin of Captain Atapattu and others (it cost Lanka a Test match loss in my reckoning). More recently, in 2007(?) he was punished by exclusion from a short tour.

Dilshan is widely admired for his electric fielding skills. It is not only a question of his work at the crucial backward point and/or cover position. He is a versatile fieldsmen, good in any position. What is more, just occasionally he produces a miracle wicket through an amazing catch or a stupendous run-out. Ask Damien Martyn about his run-out dismissal at Adelaide in 2006 and Ian Bell about his run-out at Galle last year or ask Prasanna Jayawardene about his catch at leg-slip to dismiss Tendulkar at the SSC (both Test matches, but fielding skills are fielding skills). The point about miracle wickets is that they lift a fielding and bowling side.

Mister Insistent, however, insists that Dilshan must be evaluated for his contribution as a batsman. Reply: yes, that is the most vital aspect, but not to the total exclusion of other dimensions surely — Dilshan's fielding and value as occasional bowler must be part of the weighing. To exclude these other considerations is bias. The bias is compounded when no allowance is made for the special circumstances of position No. 6 or No. 7. It is then triple compounded when Dilshan is accused of being "inconsistent" in his batting on the basis of evaluations restricted to the latest series. That is, Dilshan has consistently been subject to the policy of "2 or 3 strikes and you are out" — where

*(Continued on page 22)*



“strike” refers to poor score. This is further aggravated when the same principle is not applied to favourite sons such as Chamara Kapugedera – about which more later.

As far as I can work out, one reason for this degree of prejudice may lie in Dilshan’s style of batting. He is certainly impetuous and there is a wham-bang character to his batting that detracts from elegance, but attests to his fighting qualities. The value of his fighting cameos have been displayed on several occasions – but they have not always been etched in memory because Dilshan sometimes does not last till the end of 50 overs (in contrast to Arnold) and sometimes throws his wicket away. Nevertheless, it is significant that during the course of the IPL 20/20 matches Delhi saw the bevy of benefits he brought to their side and replaced Shoaib Malik (Pakistan’s captain no less) with Dilshan for their last set of games.

Dilshan bore the impact of prejudice and that of crude assessments from both Selection Committee and fans during the last ODI series versus India. No account was taken of his highly significant contributions during the Asia Cup a few weeks prior to this. He was dropped from the XI for the fifth ODI because of three “failures.” Low scores must, however, be evaluated by refined attention to circumstance. Two matches were played at Dambulla, where batsmen usually “have to grind,” as one past cricketer told me when I was there, and where low totals are normal. On this occasion the pitch was relatively better in the afternoon during the second innings. The pitch was at its most difficult in the first 90 minutes or so. In ODI One Sri Lanka received the gift of a second innings and duly won, courtesy of two solid ‘grinds’ by Mahela Jayawardene and Chamara Kapugedera. So Dilshan (and Chamara Silva) did not get to bat when the going was relatively good.

Sent into bat in ODI Two, Sri Lanka collapsed quickly to 4 for little. Dilshan strode in and attacked, while Jaysuriya batted quietly at the other end intent on survival. There was one ugly heave where the dice ran his way: lucky to survive. Then, over the course of a few overs, there followed a crisp pull for four and two punchy off-drives to the boundary. He then pulled a ball towards a gap, but Badrinath closed the space and took a brilliant diving catch. This was perhaps a risky stroke on Dilshan’s part and one can suggest that he should have kept the ball down, but one can also regard it as a little spurt of typical fighting Dilshan, which set the base for

more fighting work by Kulasekera and Thushara.

At the Premadasa Stadium whoever won the toss was at an indecent advantage and won the game. That became crystal clear in the very first of the matches – Game Three in the series – for the ball seamed as well as turned sharply by the late evening from towards the end of the first innings to the first hours of the second team’s outing. So, batting was relatively easier in the afternoon and rather devilish in the evening/night under lights. Sri Lanka had to cop this fate in Game III as well as IV. Dilshan was among the several top-order batsmen who failed to score much on both occasions. My first impressions of his stroke in Game III was that it was ‘rash;’ but on seeing the video-record I discovered the TV commentator complimenting Munaf Patel for a “good ball.” The point here is that one must attach caveats of different measure to low scores arising from (i) a terrific ball or “jaffa” as the Aussies call it; and (ii) a good ball — thereby distinguishing those moments from what one can deem a “soft dismissal.” So what I have generated here is a fine-tuned evaluation of Dilshan’s failures in this particular series (44 runs and average of 14.6 in 3 inns) that qualify their implications.

This failure must then be evaluated in conjunction with his record in the other ODI series in 2008:

Versus Country	Innings	Not Out	Highest score/s	Average	Fifties
Australia	7	2	170 62*	34.00	2
West Indies	2	Nil	66 64	33.00	1
Pakistan	6	Nil	134 56	22.33	1

Over 30 is a good average for a No. 6/7 if it is accompanied by a good strike-rate. Though Dilshan’s Pakistan figures are the worst of these three sets, in fact, his batting performance here was the most momentous. With Sri Lanka batting first in the finals against India, he was required to enter the field with the score reading 66 for 4 wickets, but Jayasuriya in good nick. He went on to score 56 in 74 balls and took part in a crucial partnership of 131 runs with Jayasuriya (112) so that Sri Lanka eventually totalled 273 runs. This was one of the major turning points in that game in favour of Sri Lanka.

In broader context let me note that his overall ODI international statistics read as 129 inns, 26 n/o, 2994 runs, for an average of 29.02



with 14 fifties and a strike rate of 80.24. Dilshan's average is below that of Arnold and Collingwood and on a par with Hashan Tillakaratna. But the latter's strike rate is poor (57.50), whereas Dilshan's is outstanding – even superior to that of Arnold (72.55), Collingwood (76.31) and Michael Bevan (74.15).

That noted, it is by his recent work that Dilshan must be assessed. So the issue I have raised is this: how recent? Just the last series of ODI games – a kind of instant evaluation? Or on the basis of a number of recent series? I consider it quite horrendous for Selectors to be guided by just the last lot of matches unless the batsman in question has looked all at sea. That is why I have paraded Dilshan's figures in all four series in 2008. These statistics are meant to counter the slash-and-burn hacksters who follow the principle "three strikes and you are out."

It also happens that these hacksters are prejudiced in their attitude to Dilshan and have been for quite some time. This bias has been evident over the years in their evaluations of Chamara Kapugedera (hereafter "Kapu") in comparison with Dilshan at a stage in SL's cricket when Kapu was batting at No. 6 or No. 7 and in competition with Dilshan for a spot in the final XI.

Visual evaluations of Kapu's capability by Sri Lanka's coaching staff seem to have been the basis for the young 19-year old to earn a double-promotion to the highest level as a member of the squad touring Australia in early 2006. During the first final at Adelaide, a game that I witnessed live and recall well, he made a brilliant 38 runs in 21 balls batting at No. 7. Sri Lankan fans seem to have an indelible memory of this 'affair' and ever since then he has been a blue-eyed boy. They have not remembered Dilshan's 26 n/o in 20 balls (mostly in partnership with Kapu) or the four run-outs he effected during the same game. I do. I would have made Dilshan (not Sangakkara) man of the match.

In point of fact Kapu has been no less inconsistent than Dilshan in his ODI performances over the last few years. His terrific 38 notwithstanding, his average during that 2006 Australian series was 14.60 because he scored only 73 runs over 5 innings. Since then he has been up and down in his achievements, though he has improved recently. His overall international ODI statistics read as 36 inns—2 n/o—816 runs—24.00 average with five fifties. So what we see, then, is an application of double-standards by some eager fans.

This does not mean that Kapu should be dropped from the side. He bats tall and can score in the V, while having an ability to clear the ropes. In the fourth ODI versus India at the Premadasa Stadium his innings was excellent and was cut short at 30 runs by a horrid lbw decision. He is also cricket quick and a good fielder. It is now clear that, his modest record notwithstanding, the Sri Lankan hierarchy have identified him as a prospective talent to be nourished and have pencilled him in to bat at No. 4 when Sangakkara opens [and at No. 5/6 perhaps when the latter does not, given the question marks around Chamara Silva]. He has been batting up the order since the tour of the West Indies. For this reason one should not compare his recent statistics with those of Dilshan: my argument is that different criteria apply to No. 4 from those for No. 6 and No. 7. The latter cannot normally be expected to average as much as the No. 4s, but must have a decent strike rate and reveal a capacity to rotate the strike as well (the last criteria is where Chamara Silva seems to fall down).

I am not arguing here for Dilshan's place in the SL Eleven to be written in stone. As matters stand, the No. 6 spot has Dilshan, Kandamby, Mubarak, Dilruwan Perera, Kaushal Silva and Chamara Silva all vying for them. The order or preference is mine, but that order could be amended after the ongoing ODI games of the A Team in South Africa. Should the Selectors make adjustments in the top-order and bring Warnapura into the line-up, Kapugedera could also be part of the mix for No. 6 [or No. 7 if there is a seven/four split and Maharoof is not at 7].

### Concluding thoughts

Statistics can be beguiling. Their aura of precision can mislead. The fact is that 40 runs on a difficult pitch, say, at Dambulla or at Wellington in gale force conditions, are of similar value to some 80-100 runs on a featherbed wicket. Evaluations of specific innings must be fine-tuned to such circumstance and to manner of dismissal, whether bad umpiring decisions or the fact that a batsman entered the scene in the 46<sup>th</sup> over and got out seeking quick runs.

The further argument here is that we must not be guided by short-term assessments of a knee jerk character. Adequate periods (number of innings) of opportunity must be afforded to newcomers. Different criteria apply to different batting

*(Continued on page 24)*





## MUSINGS & MEANDERINGS

by Derrick Mendis SJ  
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There is a long history of Jesuit priest-poets dating back to the 17th century and beyond and the likes of Robert Southwell and Gerard Manley Hopkins, among others. And Fr Derrick Mendis SJ has great forbearers endowed with the poetic muse for trail

blazing of his own. And he is not far behind, not by a long shot.

I enjoyed reading *Musings & Meanderings* immensely. As I flicked through the pages reading from the first poem *Excess Baggage* through *Rocks & Boulders to Illness*, then *A Tale of Two Flowers*, *Flying Fox*, and by the time I got to *Caryl*, the *One-eyed Squirrel*, 71 pages later, I was spontaneously reciting them aloud. Recited this way, one can evoke a fluid and rich resonance inherent in Mendis' verse.

*Musings & Meanderings* (another poetic sounding title after his earlier book of poetry *Reflections and Ruminations, Reminiscences and Reveries*) is one man's search for the meaning of life though his understanding of the Creator, of nature and the human condition. His subjects are simple and he writes as he sees it, from the heart. Almost all of his poems in the book are set on Sri Lankan themes and places. But he does record some inspirations gestated in places like Dural in Sydney and Mulgrave (Australia) and Ontario, Quebec and Sault Ste Marie (Canada) and the reader is all the more richer for those experiences.

He transfers his meditative thoughts of the world around him – firstly his experience of the exhilaration of fishing, the invigouration of swimming, the solace of meditation, the empathy of pain, the desolation of loss; the whole gamut of life in fact - into words (or verse rather). In *Dambulu Oya Family Park*:

"My wake-up call in the morning  
Is magpie-robin warble, koel heralding dawn,  
I sit beside the Oya and play the flute,

Mingling my melodies with bird-song symphony."

In the ironic *The Exemplary Catholic*

Fr Mendis typifies the classic hypocrite.

"The caviar and champagne was really good,  
The menu he ordered was only sea food...

...The repast excellent – what could be better?  
The abstinence law we fulfilled to the letter ...

..This Friday in Lent we did not touch or eat  
A single scrap of forbidden flesh or meat!"

An exemplary Catholic the Chevalier was,  
Observed the letter of the Church's laws."

On first reading the author 'seems' not to pay much attention to the techniques of poetry that one learns in the classroom. Maybe some teachers of literature will grudge him a good word, but he is sincere and the simplicity of his thoughts are the drawcards that will endear his writings to many. As in *The Sulphur-Crested Cockatoo*:

"I love to see white cockatoos fly  
Across the cloudless, clear blue sky,  
In measured flight, not fast or slow,  
Squawking merrily as they go."

Fr Mendis discovers a social message in everything around him and records it for all to share and heed. It is a simple message that is unequivocal. The author has revealed a great talent for combining passion with a moral and intellectual interpretation of life around him.

I was enticed by the beauty of the rhythms in *Musings & Meanderings* and the unusual quality of those rhythms. His poems are intense and one is easily drawn by the feast of words he provides.

*Musings & Meanderings* is a collection of poems you must enjoy. The louder the better. It is a hardcover book of 87 poems wrapped in a rather colourful poetic design of a cover with interesting line illustrations within its pages. A book you must buy even if you don't fancy reading poetry. You'd be surprised. Besides, sale proceeds for the book are directed towards a very good cause.



### Extreme prejudice...

(Continued from page 23)

positions. Team-building through some measure of continuity and team balance are also vital considerations, especially in composing touring squads. Self-reflexivity that attends to one's own subjective prejudices is a further requirement demanded from Selectors, commentators and fans. If one castigates the Selection Committee for prejudice in the free-to-air networks of the cyber-world, then, one must also be able to discern the mote in one's own eye.





## SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS

SYDNEY August 23, 2009

**P**resident of The Ceylon Society of Australia, Sunil de Silva, chaired the meeting and briefly introduced the speakers Peter Kuruvita (below) who spoke on **Serendip - a Sri Lankan Journey**, the title of his book and Dr. Tony Donaldson (right) whose topic was **The activities of the Special Operations Executive in Ceylon 1941-1945**.

Mr. Peter Kuruvita, (below) the well-known chef and owner of the "Flying Fish" restaurant, spoke first. He was born in England where his



father had arrived as a stowaway in 1952, where he married a 17-year old Austrian who had come to London from Vienna. The elder Kuruvita hankered for the land of his birth so, in time, the family went back, overland in a van converted by him for the journey and took up residence in the

family complex of three houses at Karagampitiya, where some 22 members of the extended clan lived. Peter remembers this idyllic time (four years) and feels the first sparks of his love of cooking were kindled in the family kitchen, ruled by his grandmother with an iron fist.

In 1973, economic and other conditions led the family to migrate to Sydney via Singapore where Peter hated school, leaving when barely sixteen, having enjoyed only cooking classes then an entirely female preserve. He found a job near his home in Sutherland and after acquiring some experience, backpacked to London where he served an apprenticeship, honing his skills. Returning to Sydney, he worked for some eminent restaurateurs like Peter Doyle prior to opening his own restaurant the "Flying Fish".

Peter wanted to record and publish the Sri Lankan recipes he recalled so vividly from his early years there, so he visited the country, and gathered together several generations of his family for that specific purpose. His book "Serendip - a Sri Lankan Journey" was the result of those journeys. The book was on sale after the meeting.

The second speaker, Dr. Tony Donaldson, (right) Research Fellow Monash Asia Institute, Monash University speaking on the **The activities of the Special Operations Executive in Ceylon 1941-1945**, stated that the SOE was formed in

1940 by Winston Churchill to operate in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, gathering intelligence and as later became necessary, carrying out sabotage in enemy territory. The original Ceylon group operated out of Mt. Lavinia. The group based in Singapore trained Chinese Communists for covert jungle warfare in Burma and Malaya and after the fall of Singapore organised successful escape routes – their files were transferred to India. The British planned to pull out of Ceylon if invasion threatened, falling back to India.

The Ceylon group was eventually located in Kandy under Lord Louis Mountbatten who was the Head of SEAC (South East Asia Command). The India arm devoted a great deal of attention to Indian Nationalist movements such as the Indian National Army for instance, led by the infamous Subhas Chandra Bose, who had known links to the Japanese. His assassination was authorised by the top levels of SOE but never eventuated. A school of jungle warfare was set up in Ceylon, near Trincomalee as the terrain more closely resembled that of Burma/Malaya than the Indian equivalent at Meerut. Though individual Ceylon-based operations have been written about in various books and papers, no one book described all, or even a significant number of these and Dr Donaldson hopes to write one.



The meeting was well attended and concluded with the usual social.

– Srin Peries

## MELBOURNE – August 30, 2009

The Chairman, Dr Srilal Fernando welcomed the President of the Ceylon Society of Australia, Sunil De Silva, whose subject for the evening was 'The Law and Drama'.

Sunil has a deep and interesting relationship over many years with both spheres, having been a Senior Counsel and Attorney General in Sri Lanka, and continuing as a Barrister and a Crown Prosecutor in Australia. His stage career began in the late 50s in Sri Lanka and he became well known in particular for his roles in the Ralahamy Plays and the memorable "He Comes From Jaffna" among others. He continues his dramatic activities in Sydney.

Sunil began by defining the most significant relationship between law and drama stating that

(Continued on page 26)



Law is Theatre and the Stage is a Court Room. Apart from using costume and eloquence, both use rhetoric to convince, using a discipline called *theatrum veritatis et justitiae* meaning the 'theatre of truth and justice'. He then went on to flesh out this premise giving examples from the stage, screen and television of how the Courtroom has become one of the most interesting arenas of entertainment and genuine instruction, by exploring and representing both points of view, that of the Prosecution and Defense. While he gave examples from world literature and well known films and TV programmes, he also related numerous hilarious anecdotes of the eloquent and dramatic techniques used by famous lawyers in Sri Lanka.

There are two major types of Law, one Divine or Natural Law and the other Man-made Laws that cover the numerous activities of individuals who live in a community and therefore have to set up norms and prohibitions for the common good. Man-made laws may change from time to time according to needs of the community, but Divine Law remains immutable. Sunil commented on "Iranganie", a recent production by Ernest McIntyre based on *Antigone* by Sophocles, where the theme was that conflict between the Divine Law and Man-made Law in the context of Sri Lanka in 1989." It is not simply punishment in this world that promulgates Divine Law but punishment in the next, to those who hold a religious belief in the after-life.

Man has modified Divine Law by interpretation and Natural Law by counter-acting natural laws with each other. Sunil gave us a graphic example of the latter by saying that the law of gravity would dictate that a cricket ball hurled at Dilshan Tillekeratne should fall to the ground at his feet, but he sends it sailing over the pavilion roof by using counter energy delivered by the stroke of his bat.

Sunil made good use of his acting powers to relate many amusing points made in Sri Lankan courts by lawyers such as Dr Colvin R. de Silva who used his large frame and even more, his powerful voice and superb command of the language to dramatic advantage. The Austrian theatre producer, Jubal who came to Sri Lanka in the early 50s to direct plays for the University at Peradeniya saw him in action and felt that if Colvin submitted to being moulded as an actor in his hands, he would become a veritable star. Another lawyer who used theatrical techniques was G. G. Ponnambalam who would make a dramatic entrance to the court building and then

the courts itself, just before the case was due to commence. He was preceded by two peons, one opening the door and helping him into his gown, one carrying an impressive pile of books which almost obliterated his face from view. There were even funnier stories too numerous to relate. One will suffice; when Sunil was preparing for a performance of "He Comes from Jaffna" to be given in the premises of the Anuradhapura prison, he thought he noticed a prisoner who had a familiar face among those who were acting as stage-hands. On making his inquiry, the prisoner replied, "It was you who put me here!" Sunil had to contend thereafter with the natural nervous tension that gears a performance, but also the fear that the man would knock him over the head! The fund of stories ran the gamut from the above mentioned lawyers to episodes in court with George Chitty, Christie Alles, Bunt de Zoysa and George E de Silva (already well known for his malapropism).

During question time, after the talk ended, Sunil was asked who in Sri Lanka in the Courtroom impressed him most with his eloquence. He replied that it was Dr Colvin R. de Silva with S. Nadesan coming a close second. The only factor that hampered Mr Nadesan's eloquence was his slightly eccentric pronunciation of some English words which might not have satisfied the purists of the language, but certainly added colour to his flow of eloquence!

There were several lively questions and more anecdotes in reply and the large audience present enjoyed this presentation so much that Sunil could probably have gone on without pause for another half an hour.

However, as all good things have to come to an end, the speaker was heartily applauded and everyone adjourned for tea and a chat. Mrs Senanie de Silva drew the winning raffle ticket and the book prize was won by Mrs Shyamala Paul.

– Shelagh Goonewardene

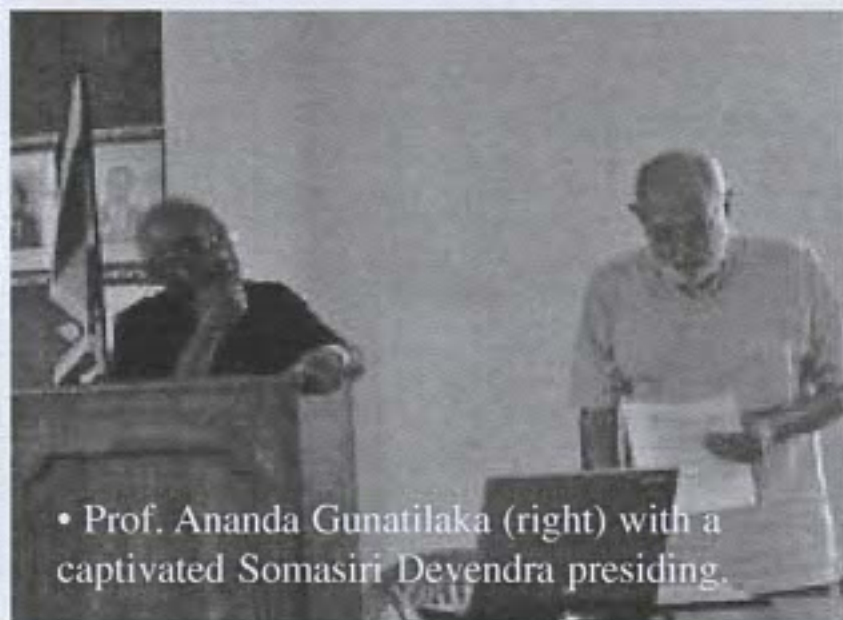
*Synopsis for the Melbourne meeting on September 29 is carried over to next issue*

#### COLOMBO 12th September 2009

The President Somasiri Devendra opened the meeting welcoming all and introduced the guest speaker - Prof Ananda Gunatilaka, a Geologist by Profession who received his B.Sc Hons degree at Wellington, New Zealand and his Ph.D. from Reading



University in the, UK. He was Professor of Geology, Kuwait University, Arabian Gulf 1979-1992, Prof-essor and Chair of Earth Sciences, University of Oman, Muscat, Oman. 1993-1998. Among his other University connections were as sometime Visiting Research Professor, University of California,



• Prof. Ananda Gunatilaka (right) with a captivated Somasiri Devendra presiding.

Santa Barbara, CA, USA, and Geological Consultant, National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka. Prof. Gunatilaka has been working towards bringing together the disciplines of Geology and History. Carrying that theme further, he addressed the meeting on the subject **CLIMATE CHANGE AND COLONIAL EXPANSION - THE PAST 600 YEARS**. (The following condensed version of Prof Gunatilaka's presentation is written for these minutes because the entire presentation is expected to be published in a future issue of *The Ceylankan*). Prof Gunatilaka's opening remarks were "History and Geology both deal with narratives of events that have happened in the past". In his presentation and the discussion that followed Prof Gunatilaka explained how past climates have influenced historical events. By juxtaposition of these two factual narratives Prof Gunatilaka brought out and explained interesting outcomes of the past 1000 years of history. The years 1400-1850 in Europe he designated as the **LITTLE ICE AGE (LIA)** in contrast to the **MEDIEVAL WARM PERIOD** which preceded it. The LIA was characterized by extremely cold climates in Europe and N. America. Freezing weather, thunderstorms, excessive rainfall, hunger, famine, breakdown of agriculture and farming, social unrest, plagues etc. were a common feature. Prof Gunatilaka said "coincidentally the greatest phase of European colonial expansion (by Portugal, Spain, Holland, Britain and France) followed the onset of the LIA". Historians surmise that this colonial expansion mainly had



## A Warm Welcome to our New Members



- David & Gillian Branagan Willoughby NSW
- Srian & Kamala de Silva Merewether NSW
- Chulangani de Silva Nugegoda Sri Lanka
- Norman & Pamela Don, Camira QLD.
- Shirley Somanader Nugegoda Sri Lanka



to do with trade, spread of Christianity, plunder and eventual occupation and subjugation of the conquered peoples. The scientific narrative, however, suggests that besides the above factors, the deteriorating climate in Europe and severe bubonic plague pandemics when populations were decimated also played a determining role in colonial expansion to warmer climes. Prof. Gunatilaka said that "it is possible that the economic and political powers of these five major European trading countries were determined in no small measure by the unusually cold climate of these four hundred years". In support of his theory he said "There was a flow of wealth (from taxes, trade and booty) from the conquered warm countries of the tropics to the cold countries of Europe". The role of climate may have been underestimated by historians in their narratives. This possibility was discussed at length by members of the audience after Prof. Gunatilaka's talk.

Fellowship over snacks and tea brought the pleasant evening to a close.

### VOTE OF THANKS

Mike Udabage proposed a vote of thanks to Prof. Gunatilaka and commented on the unique manner in which Prof. Gunatilaka brought two seemingly unrelated subjects - climate and colonial expansion over a period of time - to explain the connection between the two.

**In conclusion Mike took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Founding-President of the Colombo Chapter Mr. Somasiri Devendra who, despite his time consuming maritime research work and at least two publishing projects and many other works in progress, undertook to set up the Colombo Chapter on a sound footing. The Devendra style of doing things is a legacy for others to follow, he said. The many contributions made by Mrs Dayadari Devendra, son Nalaka and daughter Mihiri to the Colombo Chapter meetings were recognised.**

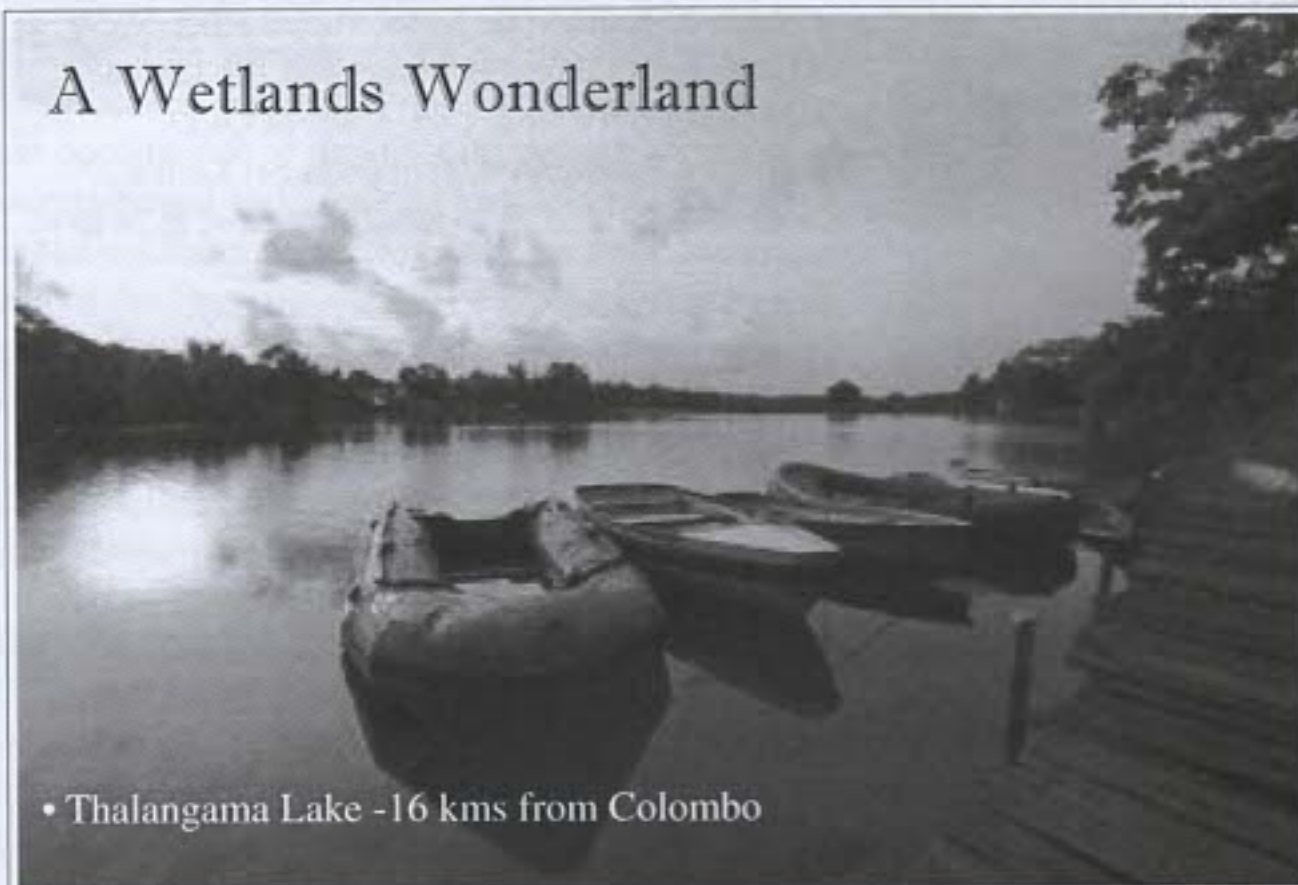
– Mike Udabage





Kingfishers, and a wide range of forest or garden birds are some of the birds I have noted at the lake. Large trees in the local gardens add to the habitat of the area. To my delight a large troop of Purple

## A Wetlands Wonderland



• Thalangama Lake -16 kms from Colombo

Thalangama Lake and Wetlands is close to the Sri Jayawardenepura Parliament of Sri Lanka, a few kilometres from Colombo. It is an urban refuge for a great variety of birdlife, mammals, reptiles and freshwater fish. The Lake's origins go back to the era of King Parakramabahu and history indicates the lake has been used for paddy cultivation on a continuous basis for a very long time. It also serves as an important flood detention reservoir for the greater Colombo area. As recently as 1996 a diversion canal was built linking the lake to the Kelaniya River to prevent flooding of the new parliament.

Purple Heron, Painted Stork, Open-bill Stork, Purple Swampphen, White-breasted Waterhen, Stilts, Indian Pond Heron, Egrets,

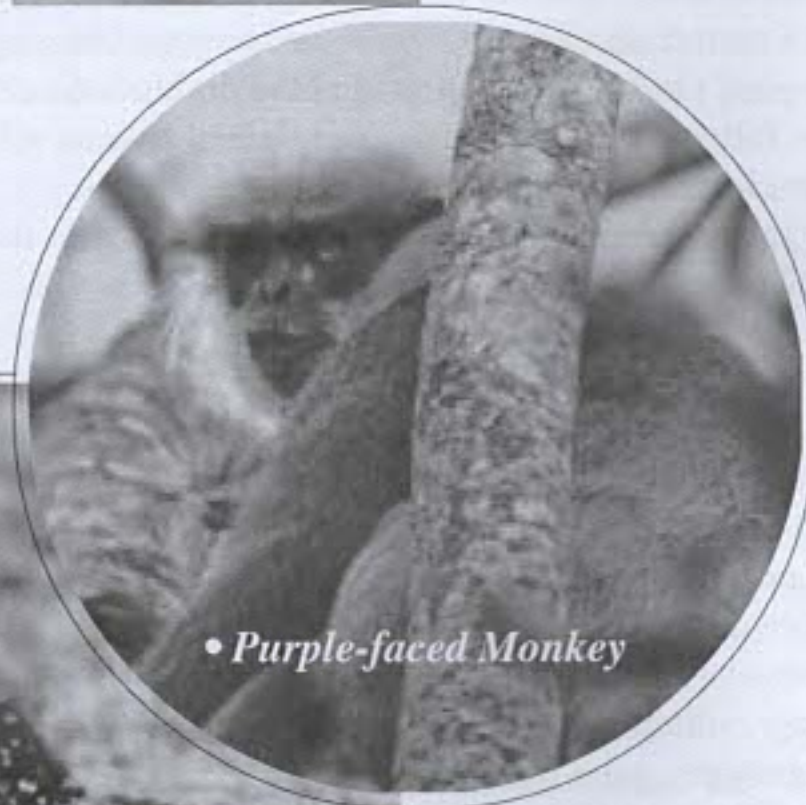
Faced Leaf Eating monkeys also made an appearance in some of the residential gardens to feast on the seasonal mango crops. Some very large Water Monitors and Land Monitors were also observed. Many local residents enjoy a stroll along the lake road in the evenings, whilst the local lads and their friends frolic in the cool waters at the favourite bathing spot. Some interesting holiday homes are also nestled in the leafy settings along the lake fore-shores. One may also hire a boat for a leisurely ride on the lake at very reasonable hourly rates.



• Egret



• Kabaraya



• Purple-faced Monkey







**M S Perera** (MS to all his friends) was born in Ceylon in 1920. MS was exceptionally talented academically and although not born with a silver spoon, his skills were recognised early. It speaks volumes for his talents, tenacity and desire to excel, contribute and be of service to his motherland, that he rose to the highest echelons of Government Office.

Born in Balapitiya in the south of Sri Lanka, he had his primary education at Siddharta College, and thereafter, attended Ananda College, Colombo after winning a scholarship. He entered Colombo University, also on a scholarship and graduated with Honours in History in 1943.

In 1948, he gained entry to the Ceylon Civil Service, the most highly regarded of the professions one could aspire to in Ceylon and to which the cream of the graduates entered.

Initially, he served as Assistant Government Agent in a number of provincial towns, before he was appointed General Manager of the Gal Oya Development Board. The Gal Oya Development project was an ambitious initiative of the then Prime Minister D S Senanayake, the first PM of independent Ceylon, who sought, among other things, to revitalise the ancient tanks, recolonise the area by bringing villagers to the newly developed areas, and provide housing and employment to the new settlers, ushering growth and prosperity to the Regions.

MS organised the Co-operative Bank and was the first President of the Board of Directors

of a multi-purpose Co-operative Bank for new settlers in Gal Oya. Simultaneously, he was involved in advising and organising many projects on rural credit, rural indebtedness, and integrated agricultural development in Ceylon. At the time, there was a cycle of indebtedness, mainly attributable to inadequate management of credit given to farmers when there were crop failures or other factors impacting on their ability to repay loans. As a consequence, the farmers were at the mercy of voracious private money lenders. By providing a members' co-operative lending scheme and proper management of the credit, farmers were better able to manage their finances.

During his period of office in Ceylon, MS was in charge of the implementation of three major Acts of Parliament: The Paddy Lands Act; The Crops Insurance Act; and the Guaranteed Price Act.

He served his country of birth with distinction and presided over many initiatives of the Government.

After the privately run Bus companies were taken over by the central government, MS was appointed Chairman of the Ceylon Transport Board.

He was also Director of Commerce promoting Sri Lankan products overseas. As Commissioner Agrarian Services, he strengthened the Agricultural Industry in Sri Lanka augmenting both the production as well as training of personnel. MS was the first Chairman of the Mahaveli Development Board, another major initiative of the Government to bring water to the dry zone.

He was appointed General Manager of the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation at a crucial time when the industry was nationalised. His wife Amita recalls his presence, physically, in the middle of the night, to ensure the success of the operation of taking over the Shell, Caltex and Esso refineries to prevent sabotage by the then powerful oil companies.

MS negotiated on behalf of the Government of Ceylon with Russia for the supply of cheaper Petroleum to Ceylon. His skills as a negotiator on behalf of the Government was recognised by the then politburo in Russia, who were impressed by his tenacity and skills.

Those skills were unique and in demand. He was co-opted to the United Nation's Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO) as a Consultant

*(Continued on page 30)*



## Appreciation (Continued from Page 29)

Later MS joined Asian Development Bank (ADB) as a senior consultant. At ADB, he was in charge of granting loans to developing countries in South East Asia.

In his final years of active service, MS rejoined FAO in Jamaica as an Agricultural Consultant, where he was responsible for export promotion projects.

MS Perera did many things in his lifetime. His was devoted to serving firstly his country, then South East Asia and lastly, the West Indies.

On retirement, MS and his family migrated to Australia where he put his organisational and practical skills in the service of the Sri Lankan and Buddhist communities in Australia.

At his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, his daughter Yasanti quoted the following:

*"The character of a person is what one is prepared to do after all the applause has died down, the spotlight has gone out and no one is around to give credit".*

*(source unknown)*

This was MS. He did many things upon retirement. He was in the committee of the NSW Buddhist Council for many years, where he coordinated teachers to teach Buddhism in Public Schools in Sydney. He took an active interest in

the Sri Lankan community in Australia as well as the Buddhist community in New South Wales.

MS supported every initiative of the Sri Lanka Buddhist Vihare Association, (the financial and social Arm of Lankaramaya, the Sri Lankan Buddhist temple at Schofields). He was its first life member, the first to donate funds to set up the Temple and was a regular attendee at the Temple. His last act was, in fact, to hand over personally his cheque towards the new building project of the Dharmasalava to be built at the Temple grounds, a Hall to house the devotees who come in their hundreds to listen to Dhamma talks and meditate.

He chose his partner well. In that again he demonstrated his unique talent for excellent choice and decision making. Amita his partner of 57 years cared for him, loved him and gave him all the care needed when his health was failing. She indulged him fully; she never left his side unless his children and or their spouses were available to give him the same care and attention she gave MS.

With all his service to the community, he was a devoted husband and father to his children Yasanti and Dushyanta and a loving father-in-law to Sunil and Hiranya and grandchildren Puminda, Savanti and Senara.

A gentleman in the truest sense of the word.  
**MAY HE ATTAIN NIBBANA.**

## Appreciation by Windsor Morris

Charles Silva, who passed away on August 29, 2009, opened the Ceylon Restaurant in Child's Street, Earls Court, London in the late 1960s. It quickly became a meeting place for the small community of Sri Lankans living in London. Charlie was a most welcoming host, creating a warm ambience in the restaurant. As you know, Sri Lankans love their food and Charlie was swift to prepare such items as pittu, string hoppers and rotis as soon as his countrymen walked through the door of his restaurant. Many a time, there was a singsong accompanied by musical customers, who had brought along their instruments, in preparation for a good evening.

About 20 years ago, Charlie returned to his homeland, settling just outside Galle. Forever the restaurateur, he established a small *batth kade* (eating house) in Havelock Road, Galle, to be managed by his niece's husband. In later years, he became less mobile, so his niece, her husband and children took care of him.



Whenever visited by friends, Charlie had that same welcoming smile and warm hospitality. Somehow, he could always produce a delicious meal, accompanied by a bottle of whisky. Just like the "old days!" He loved to show visiting friends his photo albums, reminiscing of old times and good friends.

Charlie was a good ambassador to England for us Sri Lankans, encapsulating the friendliness and warmth for which we are known. He leaves behind a trail of warm memories and will be sadly missed by his family and friends.



**Notice  
Board**

**CSA PUBLIC MEETINGS  
SYDNEY – Annual General  
Meeting & Dinner**

**Sunday November 22**

at Thornleigh Community Centre  
(corner Central & Phyllis Avenues - off Pennant  
Hills Road). AGM starts 7.00 PM.

Followed by customary Buffet Dinner (catered by  
Blue Elephant).for Members & Guests  
at 8.00 PM

**COST is \$30.00 per person.**

**BYO wines & spirits**

with singing of traditional Christmas Carols  
& Oldtime favourites

RESERVATIONS are ESSENTIAL for Dinner  
NO LATER THAN November 12.

For bookings & payments  
contact Thiru Arumugam on (02) 8850 4798  
Email: [thiru.aru@gmail.com](mailto:thiru.aru@gmail.com)

OR you can mail your cheques in favour of the  
Ceylon Society of Australia to Thiru at  
25 Chiltern Crescent, Castle Hill NSW 2154  
Those with vegetarian or other dietary  
requirements are requested to contact  
Chandra Senaratne on (02) 9872 6826  
Email: [charboyd@iprimus.com.au](mailto:charboyd@iprimus.com.au)

**YOUR MEMBERSHIP...  
... KEEP IT CURRENT!**

As you would be well aware, the CSA works on a shoe-string budget and struggles to meet ends. Therefore, it is vital that all members pay their annual subscriptions on time. We seek your cooperation in doing this promptly each calendar year. Subscriptions FOR 2008 are overdue and those for 2009 are now due. You may send a cheque or MO in favour of the Ceylon Society of Australia to the treasurer Upali Dharmakirti, 3 Viola Avenue, Warriewood NSW 2102 or pay direct to the CSA bank account at the Commonwealth Bank, the details of which are: **BSB: 062308 Account Number: 10038725** However, if you do pay by bank transfer, please ensure that your name is mentioned in the bank advice. We have received a couple of payments in

**NEXT COLOMBO MEETING**

Saturday, December 5, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

**Mr. Haris de Silva**

*(Retired Director, National Archives)*

**Ambition, Disunity and Conspiracy  
and the Tragedy of 1815**

Questions and discussions will follow

**Venue: Lions Activity Centre, Vidya Mawatha,  
Colombo**

**Directions:** (Vidya Mawatha which joins  
Wijerama Mawatha to the Independence Square,  
is now accessed from its Wijerama Mawatha end.  
Proceed along Baudhaloka Mawatha, turn into  
Wijerama and then turn left - towards  
Independence Square - at the lone tree junction.  
Enter the Lions Activity Centre through drive-  
way on your right between the SLAAS and the  
Institute of Engineers buildings)

**Attendance is FREE.**

**Interested ? Please contact persons below.**

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Mike Udabage, (Treasurer)

Email: [mike\\_udabage@itechne.com](mailto:mike_udabage@itechne.com)

the past where the bank had no record of the payees' names and we were unable to correctly allocate the payment. If you have made such a transfer in the past without providing your name, please contact Upali with full details of the transfer you made.

Overseas members are kindly reminded to send their remittances by Bank Draft in Australian currency or pay by using SWIFT Code CTBAU2S. Personal cheques in foreign currency cannot be accepted. Sri Lankan **resident members** have the option of paying in Rupees to the Local Treasurer. Please refer to inside front cover for contact details. **Annual subscription rates are:** All Members: AU\$ 30.00 Australian Pensioners: AU\$ 20.00 Sri Lankan-resident members: SLRs. 3,000

**For details about your subscription status please contact Upali on Int + 61 2 9986 0337**

Email: [upalid@optusnet.com.au](mailto:upalid@optusnet.com.au)

*The production of this journal has been supported by a donation from the Lions Club of Bankstown, New South Wales, Australia, courtesy of our Public Relations Officer Lion Harry de Sayrah OAM JP.*





ABOVE: This 1860s photograph of Colombo Fort's South or Galle Gate by S.Slinn & Co. was taken 30 or so years after the sketch of the Fort was drawn (see story Page 9).

INSET: The coat of arms seen here is the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom and would have been blazoned there sometime after the capture of the Fort from the Dutch by the British in 1796. As seen in the photograph, access to the gate was over a drawbridge which led to an enclosed courtyard and then through the rampart into the Fort.