



The Ceylanikam

The Journal of the
CEYLON SOCIETY
of AUSTRALIA

ISSN 1836-8646 Journal 65 Volume XVII Number 1 February 2014 Editor: Doug Jones



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The Ceylankam

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From the Editor...

We have a New Year. We have a new committee and it is time for a new issue of the journal to start off the CSA's life cycle for the next 12 months. This can be an exciting time, editorially speaking or one riddled with nerves, depending on the material at the editor's disposal. We began the exercise on an even par – just enough material to fill the pages. As we happily trotted along, however, we found that some articles needed further clarification of facts from the authors, which meant holding them back for a future copy. Running against the clock, we had to look for replacements that we did not have – the proverbial empty larder. After a few desperate emails to faithful and obliging contributors, we have managed to string together another good issue.

Vama Vamadevan came to our rescue with an enlightening piece on Sir Emerson Tennent, a highly controversial Colonial Secretary who nevertheless made great contributions to Ceylon by his writings. While Rex Olegesearam engagingly recounts his Peradeniya university days in the fifties, Samuel Thevebalan Arnold goes back to the 'First English School in Sri Lanka' and Thiru Arumugam concludes his scholarly two-part article on the Ceylonese teenager who received Royal Patents for his prodigious inventions a century ago.

M.D. (Tony) Saldin looks back at a futile attempt to establish a British Embassy in the Kandyan kingdom in 1800, while Roger Thiedemen relates the story of Sunethra Devi's brush with death over Singapore. We are delighted to honour CSA member Victor Melder and his wife Esther on their recent celebration of 50-years' of married life. Victor single handedly established a unique library containing material covering the diverse history and heritage of Sri Lanka.

All these and the usual features happily make up our first issue for 2014.

Believe me, the paucity of material at our disposal is, I repeat, at a desperate level. Hence this appeal to all our readers for more literary contributions from you. Further details on how to submit articles are published elsewhere in this issue.

The Ceylankan is a specialist journal of quality articles with the sole purpose of keeping the culture and heritage of Sri Lanka alive. And to have that treasure available in one publication for posterity is our goal. There can be none better qualified to enrich these pages than its own readers. While original, unpublished material is preferred, we will seriously consider submissions that may have appeared elsewhere and run them, if suitable, with due acknowledgements as required.

So do not let this appeal go unheeded.

About the Ceylon Society of Australia

The CSA is a non-profit organisation, incorporated in Australia. Its main objectives are to foster, promote and develop interest in the cultural heritage of Sri Lanka, especially the post-medieval period when this country was first exposed to, what we now call, globalisation. Apart from publishing the journal – **The Ceylankan** which has attracted much international appreciation – the Society holds meetings quarterly in Sydney, Melbourne and Colombo. Most importantly, it is non-political and non-partisan and studiously steers clear of political and similar controversial issues. CSA is not a formal, high profile Society but rather, a gathering of like-minded people, open to receiving and imparting new ideas, who greatly

enjoy a quarterly meeting in reasonably modest and intimate surroundings. While Sydney is home to the parent body and looks after the needs of the society in all of NSW and the ACT, the Melbourne Chapter covers members and others residing in and visitors to Victoria; the Colombo Chapter caters to CSA members in and passing through Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lankan public! Members of the public with an interest in the study of Sri Lankan history, culture and heritage – the young members of the public are especially welcome! – are invited to attend. Admission to these meetings is free, while donations to defray expenses are much appreciated.

Our Readers Write

Ceylon's cricketing and other sporting heroes

My contribution to the November 2013 edition of *The Ceylankan* under the title "Ceylonese Cricketing greats of the mid 20th Century" has evoked a few responses among which was an opportunity for a serendipitous contact with one of the cricketers featured therein. I have often wondered how many of these 41 cricketers are alive today, and it was with much pleasure that I was able to contact one of them living in active retirement in Melbourne. He is none other than Hugh Aldons who holds an unrivalled record in that he is the only sportsman, past or present, with the honour of representing the national side in three sports. A fact that I had failed to mention in the article is that Hugh Aldons represented Ceylon in cricket, rugby, and hockey. He had the added distinction of captaining the Ceylon team in hockey. May I add that Hugh Aldons was in the champion Havelocks Rugby XV which won the Clifford Cup in 1951 – a team that included our highly regarded CSA Committee member Dr Robert Sourjah. Robert, of course, was the legendary skipper of the Trinity College Rugby XV that played against Royal College in the First-ever Bradby Shield game in 1945. *Ad multos annos* - Robert and Hugh!! Among players representing the country in more than one sport, Mahes Rodrigo is the only other Double International having represented Ceylon in cricket and rugby. There were also Derek de Saram and his brother Koo who played golf and tennis at the highest levels in the island but those sports had no national teams.

I have also to draw attention to a possible printer's devil creeping into the article. The cricketer mentioned erroneously there as HIK Fernando is, in fact, another cricketing personality - HI Fernando and whose signature could be clearly seen on the back cover. I hope this correction will sort out the confusion that may have arisen in the mind of the reader.

THE RAMBLER (Sydney)

HI or HIK?

The article by The Rambler in the November 2013 issue (J64) had a mistake. HIK Fernando was from St Peter's College, played for NCC and, of course, Ceylon. It was HI Fernando who was from Prince of Wales College, Moratuwa. I double checked this with my good friend Rienzie Perera, who played for St Joseph's College and for NCC.

GORDON COORAY

Note: The Rambler had correctly named HI Fernando in the original manuscript. The editor played a major role in perpetrating an error. Thank you letter writers. Apologies to the author – Ed.

OH! HAPPY DAYS

Dr. Shiran de Silva Jayasuriya's *Musing on Kaffrinha and Baila* in the November 2012 issue of *The Ceylankan* (J60) reeled me back years to the home of Mrs. Noble Anthonisz on Frankfurt Place, Bambalapitiya. Mrs. Anthonisz shared her home with her family of daughters, her son-in-law Douglas Kelly of the Ceylon Police and, at the time I remember, a quartet of young men. Scott Direckze is now its only surviving member. There was also my future husband Maurice Jansz, Aubrey Martensz and Ian Claassen, nephew to Mrs. Anthonisz.

What follows in this recall of those long gone happy days was triggered by Dr. Jayasuriya's article. Every so often a birthday at Frankfurt House necessitated a large party. Arriving guests started by sitting on the verandah, and when this became too crowded, spilled onto the garden. All to the music of a wonderful Dutch Phillips (?) radiogram whose bass still vibrates in my mind. Mrs Anthonisz, a wonderful cook – who took over her husband's businesses on his death, one of which was as caterer to the Race Course – feasted us richly on delicious treats from patties, love cake, fruit cake and other delicacies that were served round and round by one of her daughters.

Meanwhile, as the party progressed with lots of chatter and laughter, Douglas Kelly played a leading role with his countless jokes. Then, should his sister Veena Fernand be present, we would move to the drawing room to watch Douglas and his sister dance the baila. What I remember of their dance was that while it was danced to the familiar music of the baila, it was a more courtly dance akin to dances of a bye-gone era than the usual happy, raucous movements associated with the baila. Veena using her hands as a fan with great effect.

Years later and now living in Canada, I read an article in which this particular dance was known by different name to the chikothi mentioned by Dr. Jayasuriya, as she notes: "grotesque attitudes and alert movements are indulged in while dancing to the lively tunes of the Cafferina" with "the slow measures of the Chikothi only calling for stately and dignified steps".

As our friendship with Douglas and Analeen Kelly continued despite geographical distance, we would learn that Frankfurt House, as we remembered it, was no more. Our friendship ended with their passing. Mrs Anthonisz, on the other hand, has always remained with me as a great lady. And though I never knew her personally, she was always in the background, in inheriting her husband's business on his death while expecting her third child – she was a working woman long before it was modish to do so. Migrating with her family to Australia, she died at the venerable age of 104.

– A VIGNETTE by Geraldine Jansz

New faces on CSA Committee

Thiru Arumugam

The new President of the CSA, Thiru Arumugam was educated at St Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, and graduated in engineering (*summa sine laude*) from the "Thakarang" Faculty of the University of Ceylon in 1957. After a stint in the Ceylon Government



Service he moved to work in Nigeria in 1974, and then to the UK in 1981. His final position in the UK was as a Principal Engineer with one of the world's largest multi-national companies of Environmental Consulting Engineers, while his wife Malini was a Consultant Paediatrician in the National Health Service. On retirement, they chose to move to the more salubrious climate of Sydney in 2004. They have so far been unsuccessful in trying to persuade their three sons to follow them to Australia. The older two are Traders in Bonds and Financial Instruments in the City of London, and the youngest is a post-Doctoral Fellow in Anthropology in the University of Chicago.

The avalanche of information on the internet has given Thiru's brain a new lease of life and he has written two books. The first is titled *Nineteenth century American Medical Missionaries in Jaffna, Ceylon* and the second is *D J Wimalasurendra and the history of the Laxapana Hydro-electric Scheme*. Other interests include killing pot plants (unwittingly, but much to Malini's horror), collecting Victorian Ceylon penny stamps, stage lighting, restoring vintage valve radios and ruminating about his flying activities in the old days when he held a Private Pilots Licence. Sadly, the licence has predeceased the holder.

Thiru is widely known to readers of THE CEYLANKAN. He is a prolific contributor to the journal with his scholarly and thoroughly researched articles; an obliging correspondent and a delight to any editor.

He was the Secretary of the CSA for the past five years before his election as President.

Les Perera

The amiable newcomer to the CSA Committee is Les Perera who was elected Secretary. Les was born in Bandarawela in Sri Lanka and received his education at St Joseph's College, Bandarawela. On completion of studies there, he went on to qualify as



an Accountant and advanced professionally, becoming Fellow of the Certified Chartered Accountants, London (FCCA, Lond.) and Certified Practising Accountant (CPA, Australia). In Sri Lanka, Les was Chief Accountant/Company Secretary of the Development Finance Corporation set up to finance Industry and Agriculture and to channel loans through the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank for such development. Les also received overseas training in Project Evaluation and Implementation. In March 1975, Les left Sri Lanka for Fiji on contract with Burns Philp (South Sea) Co. Ltd. as Financial Accountant and subsequently Group Management Accountant until July 1979.

He migrated to Australia with his family also in the same month. In Australia, he found employment immediately on arrival at Australian Pharmaceutical Industries Limited as their Chief Financial Officer and Company Secretary until his retirement in 1998.

Les is married to Virasmi and they have three children and four grandsons. They live in Killara.

A keen golfer, he is a member of the Killara Golf Club and has lawn bowls, bridge and travel among other interests.



Did you know that: • if you sneeze too hard you can fracture a rib? • that the electric chair was invented by a dentist?

A British Embassy to the Kingdom of Kandy in 1800

by M.D (Tony) Saldin

It was a time when the British had consolidated their stranglehold on the maritime provinces of Ceylon after ejecting the Dutch in 1796.

In 1800, Governor Frederick North decided to send an embassy to the Kandyan kingdom to obtain further concessions from the Kandyan monarch as well as negotiate the possibilities of stationing a permanent military garrison in Kandy. The governor had earlier sent William Boyd, who was acting as chief secretary after the dramatic departure of Hugh Cleghorn to the frontier town of Sitawaka to negotiate the passage of the embassy with Adigar Pilimatalauva and the ministers of his Kandyan majesty.

Governor North also intended that the embassy should be as impressive as possible so as to "awe the natives" and the Kandyan court. The task of heading the Embassy was entrusted to General Hay Macdowall, an experienced soldier.

Macdowall left Colombo on 10 March, 1800, to a salute of 17-guns with an escort of 1,164 soldiers comprising of sepoys of the 19th foot Madras battalion, five companies of Malay riflemen, Bengali artillerymen with their six-pounders and howitzers,

Madras pioneers, tent lascars, porters and pack oxen to carry bag and baggage. In the customary Sinhala court etiquette, His Excellency Governor Fredrick North's letter to His Majesty King Sri Wickrama Raja Sinha, was covered in gold cloth and placed on a silver tray, and was carried on the heads of young aristocrats with an overhead canopy of white cloth to protect it from the elements.



• Gen. Macdowell

The embassy also carried an impressive array of presents for the Kandyan monarch and the ministers of his court. A beautiful dismantled stagecoach with a team of English horses, gold and silver cloths, a case of madeira and 15 cases of Bengal sugar were some of the presents for his Kandyan majesty. Adigar Pilimatalauva's gift was a betel box made of solid gold, which was a trophy taken by the British from Tippu Sultan's palace.

At Sitawaka, Adigar Pilimatalauva, riding an elephant, arrived for a ceremonial visit to meet Macdowall, heralded by several whip crackers, torch bearers, musicians and tom-tom beaters and escorted by 1,000 militia, half of them armed with muskets. As was the custom, the greater part of the night was spent by the two envoys exchanging pleasantries.



• Governor Fredrick North

The embassy encountered many difficulties on the way to Kandy. It was nearly impossible to drag the heavy cannon through the mud and up the steep escarpments and accordingly, Macdowall was compelled to leave some of the cannon behind.

The pioneers were also prevented by Pilimatalauva from clearing a road through the jungles. He also told the general not to display his flag nor bring the artillery any further. He required that if the artillery was to be brought, it should be at the rear of the column, covered in white cloth, the sign of peaceful intent.

Pilimatalauva acted his part well since he had to delude his enemies in the Kandyan court by pretending to obstruct the British. In the midst of all these troubles, many of the porters deserted, and Macdowall had to wait till Governor North despatched more porters from Colombo.

After nearly a month, the exhausted general entered the precincts of Kandy with his staff, escorted by only two companies, each of Malay riflemen and Madras sepoys. The rest could not ascend due to the lack of porters, and also some of them were left behind to guard the cannon and supplies.

Accompanied by the Adigar and a large attendance of court officials and torch-bearers, Macdowall's first audience with the Kandyan monarch was held at night, and proved extremely tiring. On a raised throne sat His Majesty King Sri Wickrama

Raja Sinha in subdued light so as to create a sense of awe, with Malabari bodyguards. On either side the courtiers, some prostrate and others sitting cross legged, were in complete silence. In appearance, the king was a good looking bearded young man in his mid-20s and likened by the British to King Henry VIII.

The first day's conversation was a sombre affair and conducted entirely in whispers. The king directed his speech to the Adigar who repeated it to the Maha Mudaliyar in Sinhalese. The Maha Mudaliyar translated it into Portuguese to Monsieur Jonville, who in turn repeated it in French to General Macdowall. The conversation was carried out by five different people in three different languages! The general's replies were conveyed to the king through the same channel (*Percival p-408*). A certain period of time was allowed to lapse in-between audiences, since the court officials were in no hurry to hasten matters.

At the second audience, the general put forward the business of his embassy, viz. to allow the British to transport their *tappal* or letter bags from Colombo through Kandyan territory to the port of Trincomalee, instead of sending it along the time-



• *King Rajasinghe.*

consuming and circuitous route around the coast by vessel. Permission was also requested by Macdowall to station a small military garrison in Kandy to protect the king. As expected, both requests were politely turned down since the Kandyan officials claimed that the "Native soldiers of the interior are sufficient to guard his Kandyan Majesty." Macdowall was also reminded of his duty to "guard the coast from all enemies of the Kandyan monarch." The frustrated general then left Kandy a few days later empty handed.

Even though the embassy, costing sterling pounds 5,000 to the British Exchequer was a failure, Macdowall was able to glean invaluable information from the expedition. He was able to see the terrain, the various defences and judge its strong and weak points and also study the Kandyan soldier and his weaponry at first hand. Three years later, General Macdowall would return to Kandy not as an ambassador, but as an invader at the head of a 2000-strong British Army.

References :

- *An account of the Island of Ceylon/Journal of an Embassy to the Kingdom of Candy by Captain Robert Percival;*
- *The Kandyan Wars – The British Army in Ceylon by Colonel Geoffrey Powell;*
- *British Governors of Ceylon by HAJ Hulugalle, MVO.*

More on Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe

The British successfully invaded the Hill Country of Ceylon in 1815 and captured the last King of



Kandy Sri Wickrema Rajasinghe (1798-1815). He surrendered on 18 February 1815 to Sir Robert Brownrigg, the British Governor at the time. He was taken to Colombo on 6 March and placed under temporary detention in an old Dutch cell prior to his being sent to India. He stayed

under detention for a year.

Rajasinghe, the queen and others were taken to the ship H.M.S. Cornwallis under the command of Captain O'Brien and deported on 24 January 1816 to Vallore in Madras. He was held there as a prisoner-of-war until his death on 30 January 1832.

Know what?

Who or what is a Caddie? When Mary Queen of Scots went to France as a young girl, Louis, King of France, learned that she loved the Scots game 'golf.' So he had the first course outside of Scotland built for her enjoyment. To make sure she was properly chaperoned (and guarded) while she played, Louis hired cadets from a military school to accompany her. Mary liked this a lot and when she returned to Scotland (not a very good idea in the long run), she took the practice with her. In French, the word cadet is pronounced 'ca-day' and the Scots changed it into 'caddie.'

To be "In the limelight"

Invented in 1825, limelight was used in lighthouses and theatres by burning a cylinder of lime which produced a brilliant light. In the theatre, a performer 'in the limelight' was the centre of attention.

When is someone "On cloud nine"?

Types of clouds are numbered according to the altitudes they attain, with nine being the highest cloud. If someone is said to be on cloud nine, that person is floating well above worldly cares.

THIRU ARUMUGAM concludes the story of the teenager granted a Royal Patent. This Part has to be read in conjunction with Part 1 in the previous issue. Dawapurathna's second patent which was for a rotary valve was reproduced in Part 1, but the description of the valve and drawings are in this Part (Fig. 6a). The Southern locomotive valve gear was described in the last para of Part 1 and a photo of this type of valve gear is in Fig 4 in this Part.

Ceylonese teenager granted a Royal Patent - 100 years ago

One wonders whether Brown's design of the Southern valve gear was inspired by Dawapurathna's design. The common factor is the single link drive, which was previously used mainly in Hackworth valve gear and Joy valve gear and that too was several decades earlier. The main differences are that Southern's curved expansion link is firmly bolted down at both ends and that the Southern gear uses a crank off a wheel whereas Dawapurathna proposed an eccentric sheave on the axle. The latter difference is understandable because Dawapurathna's design was for inside valve gear and steam cylinder i.e. within the engine frame and under the boiler, whereas the Southern gear is for an outside cylinder and valve.



• (Figure 4) Southern Valve Gear.

The dates of the patents may be significant. Dawapurathna's patent was granted on 09 June 1910. Brown applied for a US patent on 11 July 1911, just over a year later and US Patent No. 1,033,532 was granted to him on 23 July 1912. Brown then took the unusual step of applying for a British patent also and since there were sufficient differences between his and Dawapurathna's patent, he was granted British Patent No. GB191407442(A) on 20 August 1914. We will never know for certain whether Brown's design of the Southern valve gear was inspired by Dawapurathna's patent.

An interesting corollary was that many years later Atumaru Ayakazu, an inventor from Japan, was awarded US Patent No. 4404870(A) on 20 September 1983 for a *Reciprocator for Paint Gun*. The reciprocator had fixed and movable pulleys which could move the paint gun vertically and horizontally via a single cranked linkage off an electric motor. The US Patent Examiner seemed to think

Dawapurathna's patent was relevant to assessing whether the US patent was new and inventive in the light of the published documents that already existed.



• (Figure 2) Stephenson locomotive built in 1864

It is likely the Examiner cited Dawapurathna's patent as it is one of the first patents with the International Classification code of F01L29/02 (reversing gears by displacing eccentric) with only a dozen or so predating it. The US patent was eventually granted, so it seems the Examiner eventually decided that Dawapurathna's disclosure did not anticipate the US patent application.

Engineering studies in the UK

When Dawapurathna completed his schooling at Royal College, as there were no facilities for degree level studies in mechanical engineering in Ceylon, his parents arranged to send him to UK. They could afford to do so because his father had a good legal practice in Colombo. Dawapurathna must have left for UK for further studies around 1912.

He did not waste much time because in the following year, 1913, we find him applying for a second patent. In this patent application he says that he is "*presently residing at 34, Blythwood Drive, Kelvinside, Glasgow*". Blythwood Drive no longer exists, its name was changed to Woodlands Drive many years ago. This Drive is relatively short and the entire length consists of near identical four storey town houses. These houses would have been occupied by extended families in Victorian days and any spare

rooms rented to lodgers. It is seen that this Drive is just over five minutes walk from the University of Glasgow and therefore there is little doubt that this is where Dawapurathna studied engineering. In 1913 the chief occupant of No. 34 was William B Robertson and it is possible that it was his wife who was the landlady who was in communication with Dawapurathna's family in Colombo after World War I.

Choice of the University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 and is the fourth oldest University in the UK after Oxford, Cambridge and the University of St Andrews. With his intelligence he could have entered any University in the UK that he chose to, but what reasons made Dawapurathna choose the University of Glasgow for his higher studies? Perhaps one could conjecture that it was one or more of the following reasons: it was the University where James Watt was an Instrument Technician in the 18th century and he went on to develop the marginally efficient Newcomen stationary steam engine into the mechanically efficient steam engine that powered the industrial revolution, and his surname lives for evermore as the unit of electrical power, the "watt"; it was the University where Professor William Rankine in the 19th century developed the complete theory of the steam engine and propounded the Rankine Cycle as a mathematical model that can be used to predict the performance of

the steam engine and text books written by him were in use when Dawapurathna was a student; it was the University where considerable research was being conducted on steam engines; and finally, Glasgow was the home of the North British Locomotive Co., which was at that time the largest locomotive manufacturer in Europe. North British, together with its associated Companies, Dubs, Neilson Reid and Sharp Stewart, supplied 74 of the 410 steam locomotives purchased by the Ceylon Government Railway. No doubt Dawapurathna would have seen and studied some of these locomotives in Dematagoda and Ratmalana when he was a schoolboy in Colombo.

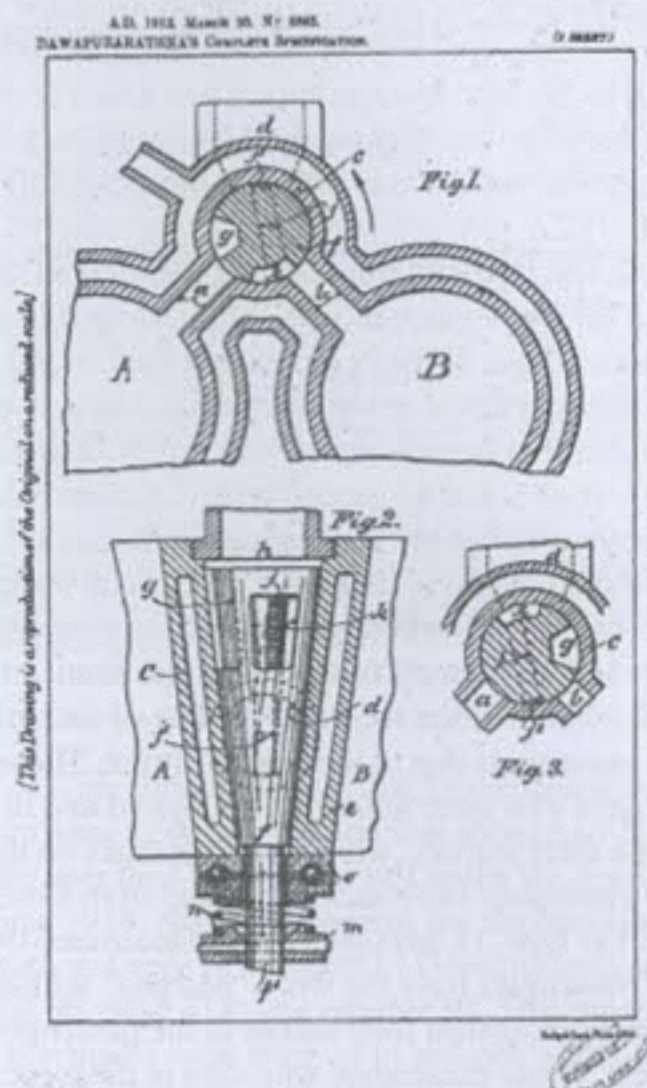
The second Royal Patent

On 20 March 1913, a few months after Dawapurathna commenced his engineering studies in the UK, he submitted an application for a patent for *Improved Valve Mechanism for Internal Combustion Engines*. His application was successful and he was granted Royal Patent No. 6883 exactly a year later on 20 March 1914. The patent application was reproduced in Part 1 of this article and related drawings are reproduced here in Figure 6a.

The most commonly used valves in four stroke internal combustion engines are poppet valves. The minimum number of valves is two per cylinder, an inlet valve and an exhaust valve. Some high performance engines have more than this minimum number. Dawapurathna's patent was a proposal to reduce the number of valves from four for two cylinders to one valve for two cylinders. The two cylinders 'A' and 'B' have a common valve chamber 'c', in which there is a rotating tapered plug valve 'f', rotating at half the crankshaft speed. The air/fuel mixture from the carburettor enters from the top through the passage 'h' and is admitted to the cylinders when the gap 'g' is in line with the ports 'a' and 'b'. When the ports 'a' and 'b' line up with the gap 'k', the exhaust gases leave the cylinder through the passage 'j' to the exhaust outlet 'd'. Quite an ingenious idea to reduce the number of valves and the cost of the engine.

One of the points that requires further thought is the friction between the rotary valve 'f' and the chamber wall of the valve body 'c'. It may require valve rings to be fitted on the valve, similar to piston rings, but tapered. The other problem not mentioned is that of lubrication of the valve chamber wall. This was a major cause of failure of early rotary valve designs.

There was a lot of interest in rotary valves in the early part of the 20th century. Some of the experimental designs and associated patents which Dawapurathna would no doubt have studied were by Frayer and Howard (1907), Italia (1911), Vallilee (1911), Darracq (1912) and Mead (1912). Later on Reverend Percy of Cheltenham (1926) and Frank Aspin (1933 onwards) proposed an arrangement of



• (Figure 6a) Dawapurathna's Improved Valve Mechanism for Internal Combustion Engines.

a tapered rotary valve above the cylinder, similar to Dawapurathna's proposal, except that his was on the side of the cylinder. However, all of the other proposals were for one valve per cylinder whereas Dawapurathna's proposal was for one valve for a pair of cylinders. Aspin did try out his valve on some motorcycle engines. By this time Dawapurathna's Patent had already expired. It is not known whether Dawapurathna's design went into commercial production.

Dawapurathna's final years

After World War I started in 1914, communication between Dawapurathna and his family in Colombo was intermittent and infrequent. Judge Weeramantry (page 174) says that there is a story that Dawapurathna was flying a test plane during the war and that it crashed. He was seriously injured and it was decided to send him back to Colombo to convalesce in a warm climate. Although functional parachutes were invented just before World War I, the Allied forces did not issue parachutes to aircraft pilots because they felt that pilots would bail out during an emergency rather than try their best to save the aircraft! The value of human life has changed since then.



• (Figure 7) P & O Nyanza on which Dawapurathna embarked for Ceylon.

A check on the records of the Royal Flying Corps, the predecessor of the Royal Air Force in the World War I does not show his name. However,

this does not necessarily mean that he was not in the Royal Flying Corps because on the night of 07 September 1940 during World War II, a German incendiary bomb fell on the War Office Records Store in Arnside Street, London SE17, setting fire to the Store and destroying two-thirds of the World War I military service records of over 6,000,000 service men and women. The other possibility is that he was employed by an aircraft manufacturer.

The story that he was injured in an air crash and was to be sent to Colombo to convalesce is probably correct because otherwise it is unlikely that he would attempt to sail to Colombo in mid-winter 1917 during the height of the war. The steamship *Nyanza* was a 6000-ton passenger liner built in 1907 and owned by the Peninsula and Oriental Steam Navigation Co. Figure 7 is a painting of this ship. It could carry up to 94 passengers with a crew of 165. It sailed from the Port of London on 06 December 1917 under Captain C G Smith bound for Colombo,

Madras and Calcutta and had on board cargo and 44 passengers, all of whom were adult males. Because of intense German U Boat activity in the seas around the UK, the intended initial course was to follow the English Channel, hugging the coast of Southern England until it reached Plymouth Harbour in Devon.

It left Plymouth in convoy on 09 December 1917 and later on the same day, while still in British territorial waters about ten miles south of The Lizard peninsula, Cornwall, which is the southernmost point in England, the *Nyanza* was hit by a torpedo fired by the German U Boat *U53* under Commander Hans Rose. This submarine had a displacement of 715 tons and could carry up to six torpedoes driven by compressed air and during World War I, it sank 87 Allied merchant ships with a total tonnage of over 200,000 tons. Six passengers and 43 crew members of the *Nyanza* died immediately and many more were injured. Clearly the rules of war were not being followed. These required the submarine to surface, and send a boarding party to examine the merchant vessel's cargo manifest. If it was found that there was any cargo which would assist the enemy war effort, the Captain of the merchant ship was informed that it was going to be sunk, and time given for the passengers and crew to get away in lifeboats and abandon ship. The *Nyanza* was badly damaged but still seaworthy. The *U53* then went and torpedoed without warning and sank the 2000-ton British coal carrier *War Tune* which was nearby and presumably because of this diversion, the *Nyanza* managed to escape and limp into Falmouth Harbour in Cornwall, the deepest harbour in Western Europe, which was about 25 miles away. The ship was later repaired and went back into P & O service until it was sold to a Japanese firm for scrap in 1927.

The typewritten passenger manifest of the *Nyanza* for this voyage records that Bertram Elibank Dawapurathna, 22 years old, bound for Colombo, with future residence in Ceylon, occupied a second class cabin. His occupation is recorded as "Engineer" which confirms that he successfully completed his engineering studies in Glasgow. Another Ceylonese travelling on the same ship was 23-year old Walter de Silva. His profession is described as "Engineering".

On the margin of the passenger manifest there is a handwritten record of the fate of each of the 44 passengers due to the torpedo strike. Those passengers who were not seriously injured and fit to continue their journey, were found passages on the P & O steamship *Margha* which sailed from Liverpool for the Far East, 11 days later on 18 December 1917. These passengers have the word "Margha" written in the margin against their names in the passenger manifest. Those passengers who died in the torpedo attack have the entry against their names, with typical British euphemistic understatement, "Not recorded as saved". The passengers who were seriously injured

DAWAPURARATHNA, BERTRAM E, AGE 22, District: Leeds
VOL 9B, Page 418

DEATHS REGISTERED IN APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 1918

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DEATHS REGISTERED IN APRIL, MAY AND JUNE 1918.

Age	District	Vol.	Page	Age	District	Vol.	Page
42	Kensington	1	135	80	H. Bierley	9	68
49	Whitby	6	258	45	Harford	7	123
54	Tinsworth	6	444	3	Leeds	9	378
0	Ashton	6	438	75	Wether	5	14
4	Birmingham	6	211	76	Thorp	4	1060
40	Willesden	7	23	10	Tranton	2	245
51	Perth	2	202	8	Amstater	8	7
3	Liardcliffe	11	1170	50	Highcliffe	3	333
47	Wadsworth	1	547	51	Highcliffe	3	346
45	Upton	6	145	78	Neerth	5	239
53	Bulley	5	624	73	Brighton	3	224
78	Scilly	5	300	5	Pydie	8	137
42	Wesley	4	378	60	Salmon	5	409
25	Wendling	2	437	64	Wether	5	90
1	Southwick	1	80	74	Worrell	1	51
3	Auxland	10	237	22	Leeds	9	418
69	Goldchester	4	723	60	Wigan	4	73
75	York	0	50	51	Wigan	4	73
71	Stokeley	0	612	33	Wigan	4	116
52	Wemmett	10	86	3	Wigan	4	496
65	V. Derby	8	747	41	Wigan	4	77
85	Chilford	0	31	78	Wigan	4	373
1	Willesden	5	174	1	Wigan	4	49
1	Derby	2	727	12	Wigan	4	347
50	Ilkington	1	373				

• (Figure 9) Dewapuraratna's death record.

and unable to travel on the *Margha* had the entry "Cancelled" against their names. Dawapurarathna's and Walter de Silva's names are in the latter category, which meant that they were both seriously injured and unfit to travel on the *Margha*. Figure 8 is an extract from the passenger manifest of the *Nyanza*.

All these details of the final months of his life have been revealed here for the first time after a careful search of records. They will enable his relatives to achieve closure of one the circumstances of his death which were uncertain until now. This was the premature demise of someone who, if he had lived

a normal life span, would, without doubt, have been one of Ceylon's greatest engineers. He would have been on a par with his illustrious relation D J Wimalasurendra, who had the vision to conceive the Laxapana Hydro-Electric Project about one hundred years ago. Around 1930, Wimalasurendra's daughter Marie, married Edwin who was Dawapurarathna's sister Enid's husband's brother. Judge Weeramantry was a four or five-year old pageboy at this wedding (Weeramantry p. 92).

NAME OF SHIP: STADA
STANDARD LINE: F. & S. S. Co.
DATE OF DEPARTURE: 19th December 1917
WHERE LOADED: SINGAPORE & CEYLON

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BRITISH PASSENGERS EMBARKED AT THE PORT OF LONDON.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AGE	SEX	RELIGION	EDUCATION	PROFESSION	RESIDENCE	DATE OF BIRTH	DATE OF DEATH
DAWAPURARATHNA, BERTRAM E.	Engineer	22	M	Hindu	University of London	Engineer	Leeds	1912	1918
WALTER DE SILVA	Engineer	22	M	Hindu	University of London	Engineer	Leeds	1912	1918
DAWAPURARATHNA, ENID	Engineer	22	F	Hindu	University of London	Engineer	Leeds	1912	1918
WALTER DE SILVA, ENID	Engineer	22	F	Hindu	University of London	Engineer	Leeds	1912	1918

• (Figure 8) Extract from *Nyanza* Passenger Manifest.

This time it appears that Dawapurarathna's injuries were terminal. We find that about four or five months later the UK Register of Deaths for April, May and June 1918, page 183, records the registration of the death in Leeds of Bertram E. Dawapurarathna in Volume 9b, page 418, line number 91. This means that his remains were interred in any one of the 19 cemeteries which existed at that time in Leeds, West Riding, Yorkshire, England. Figure 9 is an extract from the Register of Deaths.

It is interesting to note that three people who were going to be connected by future marriages were studying in UK at the same time. They were Dawapurarathna who was in UK from 1912 to 1918; his future brother-in-law Gregory Weeramantry (father of Judge Weeramantry) who studied in London from 1913 to 1918; and his future close relation D J Wimalasurendra who studied electrical engineering in London from 1915 to 1917. They could never have guessed their future connections!

(Now concluded)



REMINISCENCES OF AN UNDERGRADUATE OF THE 1950s

By REX OLEGASEGAREM

In November 2012 when I drove into the Peradeniya University along with my wife Navaranjini, it was indeed a wonderful visit down memory lane covering my very enjoyable undergraduate spell from 1955 to 1959. Then known as the Peradeniya campus of the University of Ceylon, it has indeed seen a number of physical changes in the interim period with new Halls of Residence, some significant changes to existing buildings (e.g. the old tin roof of the Economics Department replaced with new modern structures), new approaches etc. These notwithstanding, a number of features that obtained at that time still continue - the older Halls of Residence, some lecture theatres, the library including the "pillering" area, the gymnasium and the sport venues.

My elder brother Elmo and I had secured direct admissions to the University. In June 1955, accompanied by our parents, we drove from Batticaloa to the Peradeniya campus. It was exciting to drive into the stunningly beautiful campus with its lovely gardens and impressive buildings. We were on the main drag (Galaha Road) passing Jayatileke and Arunachalam Halls on the left, the sports venues on the right, the Arts Theatre, James Peiris and Hilda Obeyesekere halls, the entrance to the Lodge (vice-chancellor's residence) and on to the last Hall of Residence on that beat, Ramanathan Hall to which we had been allocated.

The first four days gave the "freshers" the opportunity to attend various orientation programmes and interact with each other, both within the hall and with other freshers residing in other halls, prior to the seniors descending on the fifth day. The seniors lost no time in subjecting the hapless freshers to ragging sessions, particularly in our respective halls of residence. Overall, the ragging sessions, despite having a humiliating theme as a measure of initiation or induction, provided good fun and the opportunity to meet the seniors. An enthusiastic and jovial fresher, my friend and neighbour, Pastor, intoxicated by the spirit of ragging pretended to be a senior and embarked on ragging another meek-looking fresher. Alas, this fresher happened to be a senior and asked Pastor to get lost using very juicy "unparliamentary" language. To our amusement, a dumbfounded Pastor hastily retreated stammering an apology.

During the period 1955-1959, all the students on the campus had to be residents in the various Halls of Residence whatever of the distance of their homes from the campus. The number of students was limited (around 2000) as only the Arts faculty (accounting for the substantial majority), the Law faculty and a few dental (dentos) and agriculture (agricolas) students in their final years made up the total population. Consequently, the residents formed a fairly close knit community, getting to know each other well. The situation is very different now with more faculties being represented in the campus, resulting in a major increase in the total student population. Although new Halls of Residence have sprung up and the overflow of students are allowed to live outside the campus and commute for their academic and student related



• *Ramanathan Hall was assigned to men in those days.*

activities, there is great pressure on accommodation in all the halls of residence.

Ramanathan Hall, in my time a men's hall is now allocated to for women. This did not deter me from visiting many parts of the hall frequented by me in the old days, thanks to the very accommodating and obliging lady deputy warden in charge of the administration office. As we marched into the office, my wife spotted a photograph and said with delight "you are in it". I was pleasantly surprised to see a photograph of the Ramanathan Hall Athletics Team of 1956, the champions of the inter-hall competition. I could hardly recognise myself after 57 years. It was really exciting to see my fellow athletes of that time. Sadly, around half the number including my best friend Henry Solomons, are no longer with us.

A visit to the dining room was interesting as the layout was unchanged and it was good to sit at the same table in the same place as before, recalling the old faces who sat with us then, including Ernest Macintyre, John Gooneratne, Nimal Bhareti, R.S. Fernando, Harilal Nonis and my brother Elmo. The last three gentlemen are sadly not with us anymore.

One of the more exciting experiences was visiting my old room (no. 67) in my first year. The furnishing was completely different reflecting the character of the occupancy- three students to a room at Ramanathan now compared to one during my time. This shows the pressure on accommodation.

The main entrance to Ramanathan Hall was still impressive with the flower garden in front. Spotting the watcher's chair brought amusing memories. Mr. J.C.A. Corea, our warden, said he had noticed a large number of students returning to the hall after the curfew time of 10 PM and he would entrust the watcher with a register in which those returning after 10 PM should enter their names. On one occasion, noticing that the watcher was fast asleep in his drunken stupor, we wrote the name of J.C.A. Corea instead of our own. After a few weeks, the genial Mr. Corea announced that he was withdrawing the register as he found his own name scrawled in it. We were all given stern advice of the necessity to return early to our rooms. This approach seemed to work.

On the way out from Ramanathan Hall, we headed briefly towards the famous Hindagala Restaurant, where we used to retreat occasionally for a tastily prepared meal of corned beef, garnished with Bombay onions and topped up with an egg, "bull's eye". Unfortunately, the restaurant has not survived and has been replaced with a bicycle repair shop and a general store.

Thereafter, we headed back towards the sporting venues passing Hilda Obeysekere and James Peiris Halls, both women's halls during our time. James Peiris' Hall reminded me of Mrs. Cook (then warden of James Peiris), a genial lady of short stature taking a walk along with her tall English husband (a war veteran) and young son ("cooklet" as we affectionately called him). Due to the significant disparity in their respective heights we were almost convinced that they used a hidden telephone device to communicate with each other!

On passing Hilda Obeysekere Hall we went down the famous "kissing bend" with its double bends. I explained to Navaranjini that this name was given not due to any amorous activities of students but because of cyclists (riding without brakes) falling off and kissing the dust. I too did ride my bike (predictably without any brakes!) heading for lectures/tutorials/sporting and other events. However, I managed to avoid kissing the dust by skilfully pressing the front mudguard with my leg over the handle bar. My friend Tissa was not so lucky. Despite my warning of the absence of brakes, Tissa borrowed my bicycle and returned fairly soon with bruises, swearing that he will never borrow my bike again. Apparently, while negotiating the kissing bend Tissa found a bevy of junior girls on their way to lectures blocking his pathway and unable to stop the bike in time, crashed into one. Fortunately the girl did not sustain severe

injuries. In the following year, when the bright Tissa became a tutor, much to his embarrassment at the first tutorial class was the victim seated in the front row. Perhaps, Tissa made up by giving her good grades!

On reaching the sporting venues, the tennis courts made me emotional. The impressive Athletics Cinder Track and the Soccer/Rugby field brought back satisfying memories. These venues had not changed over the last 55 years, except the tennis courts showing signs of some neglect.

In my very first year, I launched into tennis and athletics, winning colours. In my second year, I was elected vice-captain of the Peradeniya campus tennis team with my senior Ms Sheila de Saram (from a family of good tennis players) as captain. In my third year, I was elected captain of tennis. In both years, I organised the internal tennis tournaments, with participation from both students and dons (and their spouses). I was amazed at the enthusiasm shown by the dons, both the older and the younger. Being a student in the Economics department, the tennis tournaments brought me into contact with the participating dons from other departments - Prof. H.A. Passe (English) and his enthusiastic wife, playing mixed doubles, Prof. Hettiaratchi (Sinhalese), Dr. M.B. Ariyapala (Buddhist Encyclopaedia), Dr Upali Amerasinghe (English), Dr S.J. Thambiah (Sociology) and Dr. Karunandan (Audio-Visual). Professor Hettiaratchi was an affectionate gentleman, treating me like a son and would give me a good hug whenever I fronted up to inform him of his playing schedule. The younger dons, Dr. Upali Amarasinghe and Dr. S.J. Thambiah were not only outstanding academics but also fine sportsmen in their school and university days. Prof. Ludowyk is reported to have referred to Dr. Upali as "my most perfect pupil". I was most impressed with the attitude of Dr S.J. and Dr Upali over an incident in the course of the tournament. I was forced to "scratch" one of the younger dons half way through the tournament as he was habitually late or not turning up for fixtures without any valid reason, thereby hindering the progress of the tournament. As he arrived at the courts and noticed the next round being played without him, I was taken to task with a good dose of "ear-bashing" despite my explanation. Hearing this occurring both Dr.S.J. and Dr Upali came to my rescue and told the other don in no uncertain terms that my action was completely correct as the tournament schedule cannot be held up.

Although not a tennis player, the vice-chancellor Dr Attygalle was very supportive when I invited him to give away the awards at the conclusion of the tournament. Being the vice-chancellor for the whole University (both Peradeniya and Colombo campuses) he had an important meeting of the University Council in Colombo at the same time and suggested that I request Prof. Nadarajah (Dean) to deputise for him. However, Dr Attygalle fronted

up to give away the awards. He had postponed the council meeting. In both years, I was runner-up to T. Jothilingam (Jothi) at the finals, as I could not work out his clever and wily left-handed play. Both of us represented the combined university team at the pentangular tournament in Colombo. Sadly Jothi passed away at a comparatively young age. Sheila de Saram won the women's singles in 1956/57 and Rukmani Kodagoda (Ruki) in 1957/58. Rukmani was the All-Ceylon Women's champion that year. I was privileged to have her in our team in the year of my captaincy. Ruki died last year having reached her three score years and ten. Sheila de Saram, married to Scottie Meynert, an all-Ceylon tennis player in the 50s, lives in Sydney.



Seated L. to R: Miss R. Kodagoda, Miss D. de Saram, (P.E.) R. P. Olegasegarem, (Captain) Miss S. de Saram, Miss S. de Abrew.
Standing L. to R: T. Rosemale - Coque, E. A. Olegasegarem, R. Satkunam, B. C. P. Fernando, M. Roberts.

In my first year I participated on the Athletics cinder track in the Fresher's athletics meet, securing second places in the 5000 and 1500-metre races and third in the Inter-hall meet (which included the seniors) in the 5000 metres. In the fourth year, I won both the 5000 and 1500-metre events and was placed second in the 800 metres at the inter-hall championship meet. In the 1500 metres, surprisingly, I got the better of the more fancied Anderson Fernando (also from Ramanathan) as well as "Punchi" Saram of Arunachalam Hall (placed third). Punchi was my class and dormitory mate at St Thomas College, Mount Lavinia in earlier years and consistently beat me in this event at school.

The crowning moment in that year was Ramanathan Hall narrowly winning and retaining the Gold Cup awarded to the Hall with the best all round performance based on points earned in all sporting inter-hall competitions for the year. I was given the

honour of receiving the cup at the awards on Colours week-end. My performance in the track events enabled me to compete with the best long distance athletes in the country at regional and national athletic meets, namely Linus Dias (who represented Ceylon at the Rome Olympics in 1960) and A.S.M. Khan (the "wonder boy" from Bandarawela).

I played soccer regularly for Ramanathan Hall (captaining the hall soccer team in the final year) and representing the Peradeniya campus in the "right half" position. We did have a good season in my last year beating outside clubs and St. Anthony's College, Katugastota. Our encounter with the more fancied Colombo campus for the selection of the combined university team was the highlight when we beat them convincingly by 4 goals to 2.

Alas, only three members were selected from Peradeniya campus - Peradeniya captain P.C. de Silva, V. Easwaranathan and Michael Roberts, as the power behind the selection process appeared to be with Colombo. Although I played a good game on that day, there were three other players from Peradeniya, including my late brother Elmo, meriting selection. Elmo was our centre-half and played a pivotal role in all the matches.

The University Sports Council (Peradeniya campus) was constituted from the captains and vice-captains of the various sports. As vice- captain of Peradeniya campus tennis in my second year, I was a member of the council, which elected me to the committee

as its Treasurer. In 1957-58 I was captain of tennis and elected as the General Secretary of the Sports Council. The vice-Chancellor, Dr. Attygalle hosted an annual garden party on the lawn of the Lodge, to which a number of senior dons and their spouses, as well as the committee members of the Students' Union and the Sports Council were invited. Consequently, I was invited to the garden party two years in succession and had the pleasure of chatting to a few dons, including Dr. G.P. Malalasekera (an eminent Buddhist scholar) and Prof. J.L.C Rodrigo (Western Classics). Dr. Malalasekera gave me a salient outline of aspects of Buddhism and later presented me with a copy of his illuminating booklet on Buddhism. Being a Christian, I was delighted to have this interaction with him. Prof. Rodrigo, an old boy of Trinity College, Kandy, was a classmate and boarding mate of my uncle Walter Olegasegarem in the 1910s when the well-known A.G. Fraser was principal. He spoke to me of some interesting episodes at Trinity involving my uncle and

himself - both were outstanding scholars and my uncle won the coveted Trinity Lion and the English Essay Prize.

A big event during my time at campus was the annual Colours Weekend. The activities started on Friday with sporting competitions between Peradeniya and Colombo campus teams - Cricket, Football, Tennis, Netball and culminating in the Colours Night dance on the Saturday night in the gymnasium building. All the events were organised by the Peradeniya campus Sports Council. On Saturday evening awards were given to winners of various team competitions as well as individuals winning colours for excellence during that year. The chief guest was usually the vice-chancellor. The colours night dance, with cabaret items and featuring one of the better known musical bands as well as the selection of the "Miss University" was a most enjoyable finale.

A colourful personality

A colourful personality on the campus was the cheerful and ebullient Director of Sports, Dr. Brant Little. He guided the Sports Council and often injected additional funds into the Sports Council budget to cover any special activities from donors belonging to the business world due to his close rapport with them. In 1958 he left us for his home country, Canada. Perhaps the University Athletics team in 1958/59 would have made it to the Inter-university championships had he been there to find the necessary funds. It was entirely due to his efforts that the Peradeniya University has one of the best gymnasiums in Sri Lanka. The gymnasium was officially commissioned during my spell as general secretary of the Sports Council and named the "Brant Little Gymnasium". Funds were allocated in the last month of our committee to erect the signage in his honour. Sadly no action has been taken by subsequent committees to honour this great gentleman's lasting legacy of the gym. When we visited the venue in 2012, the sign merely stated "Gymnasium". However, I was happy to note that the gym continues to be well equipped and activities continue. There is an impressive gym office and had a number of photographs of sporting teams.

When Dr. Brant Little left, he was succeeded by Miss Dorothy de Saram. Dorothy, a past graduate of the University of Ceylon, subsequently obtained an MA in Physical Education, University of California. She was eminently suited to succeed Dr Brant. A very efficient lady who kept the sports activities moving smoothly. She was the sister of Sheila Meynert referred to above. Dorothy migrated to Melbourne with her family. Sadly, she passed away a few years ago.

In my academic life in the Arts faculty, I had the privilege of being taught by eminent professors and lecturers. In the first year General Arts Qualifying

(GAQ) we had to choose three subjects and my choice was History, Geography and Economics. History and Geography were not new as they were my high school subjects. However, the level and the interpretations were something totally different. For example, our European History lecturer Fr. D.R. Pinto (a devout Catholic priest) provided an interesting and well-argued interpretation of the Renaissance, Reformation, and Counter-reformation completely contrary to what we had learnt in the HSC at school. He contended that the Middle Ages, far from being the "Dark Ages", produced some of the best and most stimulating scholastic studies while the Renaissance, far from "freeing the mind" was tainted with vulgarity. He also stated that the Reformation was a rebellion against the fundamental beliefs of the Church and the Counter-reformation was the real reformation as it addressed the corruption and other shortcomings of the clergy. Fr Pinto also had a sense of humour. The topic was the fall of the Roman Empire and as he lectured holding the map of the Roman empire, it fell down and as he stooped to pick it up said "this is like the fall of the Roman Empire" provoking a laughter from the students. Perhaps it was not an accident, as our seniors mentioned, that the same thing happened in the previous year. Again, a female student entered the lecture theatre late as he was talking about Julius Caesar and his army crossing the river Rubicon and Fr Pinto turned to her and innocently joked: "Have you crossed the Rubicon"? Howls of laughter erupted from the students, whose fertile and sharp minds gave the innocent remark a sinister connotation and thereafter this female student was called "Rubicon". Dr. La Broy, our enthusiastic lecturer in English History was so engrossed in the substance of the topic that as he talked about the cavalry advancing and retreating, he would physically move forward up and down on the stage.

In the Geography Department, housed in the Administration block at that time, there were accomplished lecturers like Prof. Kularatnam, Dr. George Thambyapillai and Dr. Fernando. Dr Thambyapillai was outstanding as he made the fairly complex area of Climatology interesting. I recall our first geography tutorial: "What is Geography?". One bright female colleague in our group had the opening sentence in her tutorial, "Geography is about Maps and History is about Chaps". Thereafter she was called "Maps and Chaps"

Dr. H.A. de S Gunasekera ("Hades" as he was affectionately called) was simply brilliant as a lecturer in Economic Theory. He would dissect the most complex theories and concepts and put it across in such a lucid and simple manner that we could grasp them easily. I suspect Dr. Gunasekera had a special liking for our batch as he fell in love with our batch mate, the attractive Leela and later married her. Equally brilliant were Dr. A.J. Wilson (Banking

& Finance), Dr. Vandendrisen (Economic History), Dr. S.J.Thambiah (Sociology), Dr Sarkar (Statistics) and Dr I.D.S. Weerawardene (Political Theory). Dr.Indraratne (Accountancy and Applied Economics) and "Tawny" Rajaratnam (Economic History) were colourful personalities.

Dr. F.R. Jayasuriya succeeded Prof. Das Gupta as Head of Economics Department in my

second year. Although Dr. Jayasuriya extended himself to great lengths to support the "Sinhala Only" Act in 1956 by fasting on the steps of the Parliament House in Colombo to the disappointment of many of his Tamil as well as moderate Sinhalese students. He headed the panel of University dons

in 1959 recommending seven or eight students for the Ceylon Government Graduate scholarship to do chartered accountancy, and the majority were Tamils of whom I was one.

I had also the privilege of being taught Auditing (part of the Accountancy Section) by Mr. B.R. de Silva, senior partner of the chartered accountancy firm B.R. de Silva & Co. He was a sports fanatic (mainly athletics), founder member and first president of the well known Ceylon Track and Field Club (CT&FC). On hearing of my achievements in athletic competitions, Mr B.R.de Silva offered me a private Graduate Articles scholarship to do chartered accountancy from his firm as well as represent CT & FC in athletic events. I did not accept his kind offer as I was subsequently placed for accountancy articleship with the then leading firm of chartered accountants Ford, Rhodes, Thornton & Co (now KPMG) through the Government Graduate Scholarship scheme.

Although not directly involved with him as my lecturer, Dr. Doric de Souza was well known to all students during my time, whether or not they were in his classes. He was not only a well respected senior lecturer in the English Department but also a leading personality in the socialist movement in the country. Some of his public lectures organised by the Students Union were of a high order indicating his excellent grasp of social history all over the world. Dr. Souza applied his great skill in the sporting arena as well. In my first year, I witnessed the finals of the university internal Table Tennis tournament where he beat the more flamboyant favourite, final-year student by sheer concentration and clever tactics. He was a friendly personality, and at his invitation I had an interesting chat over a beer at the Kandy Lawn Tennis Club during a vacation. Dr Souza's wife was the librarian at the campus. She was a smart lady, well dressed and efficient in her job. It came as a surprise when we

heard that during the long vacation she had her second child, as she showed very few signs of her pregnancy prior to the vacation - perhaps the way she draped her saree concealed the fact. Mrs. de Souza lived in Sydney with her children during the latter part of her life.

A great and caring gentleman was our university Christian Chaplain, the Rev. Lakshman

Wickremasinghe (later Bishop of Kurunegala). He was tall and handsome, an outstanding past student securing a First Class in Economics and the sprinting champion in athletics. Although successful in the coveted Civil Service examination,

he turned down a lucrative offer to heed his calling to the Church. Always helpful and friendly, riding his Vespa scooter he visited his flock in the halls, participating in our after-dinner prayer meetings on certain days. During my final year examination, I had a few problems with stress and sleeplessness which affected my performance. When Rev. Lakshman became aware of this unfortunate situation, he promptly took me to the chaplain's quarters, where I stayed with him for three days. He calmed me down with prayers and counselling, as well as taking me down to the examination venue on his Vespa. I will never forget his kind and caring intervention.

The visit to the Arts Theatre brought back memories of weekend movies on the small screen, public lectures by prominent politicians like Mr G.G. Ponnambalam, Dr. N.M. Perera, Mr. Pieter Keuneman, Mr Tissa Wijeratne, Dr. C Suntheralingam and our own Dr. Doric de Souza. Some of the lectures were breathtaking, particularly of the great orator G.G. Ponnambalam who kept us so absorbed that there was a "pin-drop silence" in the audience for a whole hour.

We then visited a few other lecture theatres, the library and the "pillaring" area in the centre of the library complex. Called "pillaring" area as it was an open area with several pillars and students met here for a chat between lectures or library visits. A few of these friendly chats between the girls and boys blossomed into more serious relationships. This area had not changed since my time and still housed the various Notice Boards. This brought back memories as I used to post the Tennis Tournament Draw Sheets on these boards and updated results as the tournament progressed.

Both English and Sinhala drama productions spearheaded by Prof. Ludowyk and Dr. Sarathchandra in my time were of a high order - Bernard Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion" and the Sinhalese play

Some of the lectures were breathtaking, particularly of the great orator G.G. Ponnambalam where we experienced a most absorbing and "pin-drop silence" during a whole hour.

"Maname" (1956). Edmund Wijeyasinghe, who played the role of forest king in "Maname" was my batchmate. Although I was very much into drama in my school days, my participation in this area at the university was limited, partly due to my intense involvement with sports and sports administration. However, I did enjoy acting in an inter-hall drama competition in my first year for Hilda Obeyesekere Hall in a play called "Man who married the dumb wife" with Shelagh Goonewardene (nee Jansen), Chula Unamboowe and John Gooneratne. The major roles were played by Shelagh, well known in this field and Chula Unamboowe also an accomplished actor. Sadly, Shelagh, a beautiful person, passed away recently in Melbourne. Chula, a real gentleman, also passed away some years ago. Ernest Maclyntrye, the well known playwright and producer of English dramas for many years was my batch mate and hall mate at Ramanathan Hall. Certainly, Prof. Ludowyk and Dr Saratchandra had a decisive influence in Ernest's early days in this field.

The last lap of this trip was to drive up the Hantana Hill taking the identical route of the cross-country marathon. In my active years in Peradeniya, on some days (time permitting) I used to run up the hill from Ramanathan Hall, with a tennis racquet in hand and down to the tennis courts for a few sets and then to the soccer field for a hard game of soccer. Thereafter, a few rounds on the cinder track and on to the gym for badminton, tennequoits and indoor tennis. When I got back to the hall it was time for a quick shower and dinner - what a wonderful life! It was interesting to recall this routine recently when I met Dr. Michael Roberts, a well known academic

YOUR LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS

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and sportsman, two years my junior, who told me he had a similar routine (except running up the hill). This routine really kept us in peak fitness and certainly helped my performance in the athletic competitions, particularly the 5000 metres.

A visit down memory lane is not complete without a peek at the old railway station (called "New Peradeniya" during our time, but different now) which serviced and continues to service the university population. All our entrances and exits for holidays and more importantly for sports persons travelling to Colombo and other destinations went through this railway station. It was not uncommon for a few of us, particularly returning from sporting events by day or night, to take a short-cut to the halls of residence by walking over the bridge treading on the rail tracks (instead of the pedestrian walkway) with the river swirling underneath. Reflecting on this now, it seems but it hardly seemed serious to us at the time.

(Previously published in *Peradeniya University Alumni (NSW Chapter)* website: www.puaan.org/)



WE NEED SPEAKERS

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It is my rule never to lose my temper till it would be detrimental to keep it.

Sean O'Casey - The Plough and the Stars Act I (1926)

I have never met anyone who wasn't against the war. Even Hitler and Mussolini were, according to themselves.

David Low - New York Times Magazine 10 February 1946.

The social progress, order, security and peace of each country are necessarily connected with the social progress, order, security and peace of all other countries.

Pope John XXIII - Pacem in Terris (1963)

The First English School in Sri Lanka

– Batticaloa Methodist Central College (1814)

Sri Lankans live and work in different nations of the world. They contribute effectively to the development of the community and government in varied fields. People marvel at the educational and professional skills of Sri Lankans. Their fluency in English is an enviable factor. Our nation has a high literacy rate more than 90 percent and English medium schools were spread all over the island.

The birth of the early 19th century saw several organisations send missionaries to our little Indian Ocean island eg. London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1804, the Baptist Missionary Society in 1812, Wesleyan Missionary Society (Methodist) in 1814, American Ceylon Mission (ACM) in 1816 and the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1818. Each group set up schools in different parts of the island. This article is limited to the vision and mission of the Methodist missionaries in Batticaloa in the Eastern Province.

Genesis of The Methodist Ceylon Mission

In 1813, a Methodist clergyman Rev. Dr Coke asked the British Methodist Society to send him as a missionary to Sri Lanka. Considering the poor health of Rev Coke and the long sea voyage, the society turned down his request. But full of zeal to spread the gospel, Rev Coke spent the a night in prayer. The next day, he presented his life savings of 600 Pounds to the Methodist society and appealed for his request to be granted. "Even if I was left on the shores of Ceylon, without clothes or friends, still I would venture to go" was his emotional and persuasive argument.

Finally, having obtained approval, Rev. Coke left for Sri Lanka in a sailing vessel on 30 December 1813. Along with him were the Revs. Clough, Howard, Lynch, Squance and Ault (five clergymen), Mrs Squance and Mrs Ault. The sea voyage was tough

by Samuel Thevabalan Arnold

and dangerous. On the 10 February 1814, Mrs Ault died suddenly and was buried at sea. On 02 May their leader Rev. Coke too passed away. With great sadness they mourned their leader who could not fulfil his mission before burying him too at sea. The missionaries continued their voyage with determination and reached Bombay.

Rev. Howard stayed in Bombay, while the rest left Bombay on 20 June and reached Galle on the 29 June. The Sri Lanka Methodist Church celebrates Methodist Day also on 29 June. While the vessel they travelled in was berthed in high seas in the Galle harbour, Revs. Lynch, Squance and Clough reached the shore in a small boat. The small boat with Revs: Ault and Erskine and their belongings got caught in severe tidal waves and carried away to Weligama beach 17 miles from Galle. They reached shore on 30 June around 2.30 am with help from some

fishermen. Mr Keuneman who served as Magistrate in Weligama provided hospitality to the two clergy and the following day sent them to Galle on a "Palanquin."

On the Weligama beach is a small church with a commemorative plaque with the names of Revs. Ault and Erskine. The writer of this article who was a teacher in a High School in Weligama has attended services in this church. In Galle the five clergymen were provided hospitality and support in the government house thanks to the Governor Brownrigg.

Methodist Mission to Batticaloa

The first meeting of the Ceylon Methodist Church was held in Galle on 11 July 1814. The Missionaries were separated and sent to Jaffna, Batticaloa, Galle and Matara for service. Rev. William Ault who was assigned to Batticaloa, left Galle and after eight days in a small vessel reached shore near the Batticaloa Kachcheri on

12 August 1814. The journey was dangerous, "At one stage our boat almost sank, but by God's amazing Grace we reached shore," Rev. Ault said.



• The statue of Rev. William Ault erected in Batticaloa town.

Due to his determination and hard work, Rev. Ault set up eight schools and preached the Gospel. There were around 150 Christians in Batticaloa at that time. Due to the long sea journey and the severe local climate, Rev. Ault became very sick. After just nine months in the mission field, this great man who sowed the seed for education in Batticaloa entered eternity.

Beginnings of Methodist Central College –
In Lumine Tuo Lumen (Motto)

In 1814, in a Customs shed given by the government Rev. William Ault founded what was to become the first English school in the country. Mr Simon

the success of his students who sat for the Cambridge Senior Examination in 1875.

Dr S. V. O. Somanader – First Sri Lankan Principal
In Sri Lankan history, 01 October 1945 is a special day when the Free Education Scheme was introduced. This enabled every student to have free education from year one to the University. The prestigious Boys' schools in Batticaloa, St Michael's, Shivananda and Methodist Central, together with the Vincent Girls' school and St Cecilia's convent joined the scheme.

Mr S.V.O. Somanader, JP, MRST, FZS, FRGS (posthumously conferred the Doctor of Letters

by the Eastern University, Batticaloa on 5th June 2004) a distinguished alumnus of Methodist Central, became the first Sri Lankan to hold the position. He was Head Master from 1939 to 1942 and Principal from 1942 to 1955. Rev. Fr E. Crowther SJ of St Michael's College, and Mr S. V. O. Somanader of Methodist Central were outstanding Principals who brought fame to Batticaloa, and both sons of the soil!

The annual cricket matches between St Michael's and Methodist Central as well as inter-school football and athletics contests became activities of local note.

Mr R. E. J. A. Setukavalar,

BA (London), PGDE (Grandson of Rev. R. N. Setukavalar) was colleague and Deputy Principal to Mr Somanader during the period from 1943 to 1956. He was a reputed teacher of Mathematics, Latin and English (later became Lecturer at Pallaly Teachers College and St John's College, Jaffna). Tamil, Muslim, Burgher and Sinhalese students, many resident in the hostel, profited from the education on offer. Varied subjects inclusive of Science, Latin, Geography, Applied Mathematics were taught. For the first time Higher School Certificate (HSC) classes were started in 1945.

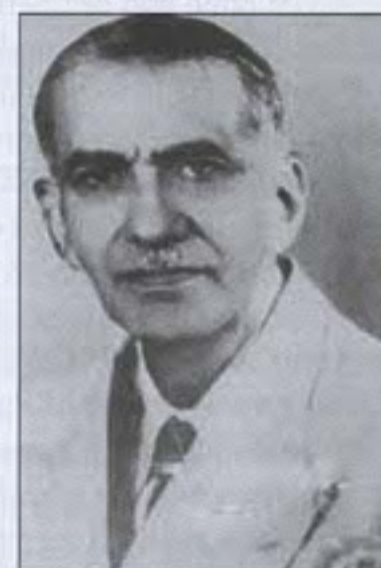
Mr Somanader celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a teacher in 1945. During the period 1946 to 1955, the college made great strides in education, sport and community service. The Old Boys Association (OBA)



• *Painting depicting the journey of the missionaries to Ceylon found in the MCC library.*

Sawyers, the Government Collector in Batticaloa, gave support to Rev. Ault who started the school with five pupils. One of the five was Rajakariar Daniel Somanader (later became Chief Mudaliyar of the Batticaloa Kachcheri). Daniel Somanader is the great grandfather of Dr S. V. O. Somanader and E.D. Somanader, great-great-grandfather of Vimala, wife of the writer of this article. When Rev Ault died on the first April 1815, there were forty students in this school. "We are always grateful to the early Wesleyan missionaries. The school founded by Rev William Ault in 1814 is the first English school in the whole Island. This institution faced many ups and downs and finally emerged as Central College". (Quote from Batticaloa St Michael's College Centenary Volume).

Many reputed missionaries served as Principals at Methodist Central including Revs. Haw, Holtom, Smith, Saunders and finally Cartman. Among the locals, Rev. R.N. Setukavalar became the first Headmaster of the school (Maternal Great-grand father of the writer's wife). He was the first in the Eastern Province to obtain a Master's Degree (MA) from the University of Calcutta. He earned credit by



• *Dr S.V.O.Somanader.*

was active and annual dinners were organised. It is of interesting that at the annual dinner held at the Colombo YMCA in 1946 the chief guests were Mr J. N. Arumugam (CCS), Prof. J. V. Appapillai and Mr M. T. Ahmed (Engineer).

Mr S. V. O. Somanader retired in 1955 after an outstanding 12-years as Principal. He was respected for his leadership, not only in Batticaloa, but also in the entire Island. He was a naturalist who took the students outside the classroom to appreciate the environment. He was a journalist, philatelist, photographer and recognised authority on the fauna and flora of the East of Ceylon. He was called the Grand Old Man and lived after retirement on the Kalkudah beach until his death. Visitors from the island and overseas were welcome in his home "Chelvastan". His son Kenneth Somanader was a distinguished journalist, photographer and Y's man of the YMCA. He retired as Director of Information of the Government of Sri Lanka. During the tsunami of 2004 this bungalow was swept away along with his son-in-law David Samuel. David along with his wife Gladys kept this home as a Visitors Lodge and acclaimed distinguished citizens of Kalkudah.

Other Principals of Methodist Central

Mr V. T. Gnanasuriam B A (London) was appointed Principal in January 1956 and Mr Prince G. Casinader his deputy. In 1956, the new government of Mr S W R D Bandaranaike as Prime Minister introduced the local languages Tamil or Sinhalese as media of education in schools. Each group had to learn in its own mother tongue. This had an adverse effect on the school. The Sinhalese students who had hitherto enjoyed bond and brotherhood with Tamil students ended. The Sinhalese students, sons of government officials or businessmen in Batticaloa and even some boarders from other parts of the island sent to enjoy quality education in English, most left, thus breaking off the bonds of brotherhood which had been developing between them and the Tamils.

In 1960, Methodist Central became a government school. The government of Mrs Srimavo Bandaranaike by act of Parliament took over private and state-aided schools run by churches and religious organisations in the island. Mr Gnanasuriam continued to run the school on the lines of its rich traditions until the end of 1964.

Mr B. T. Chinnaiyah (BA Hons. London, Dip-in-Ed.) became Principal in 1964 and ran the school effectively for the next ten years. He was ably assisted by his deputy Mr Prince Casinader. Mr S. Navaratnarajah, (B A, Dip-in-Ed) became Deputy

Principal following the transfer of Mr Casinader as Principal of a government school in 1972. Together Mr Chinnaiyah and Mr Navaratnarajah appealed to Mr Rajan Selvanayagam, M P for Batticaloa and an old boy of Central, for a modern building to house the science laboratories. A majestic two storied building is the outcome of that request.

On retirement of Mr Chinnaiyah, Mr Navaratnarajah became acting Principal for a



• *The MCC Assembly Hall.*

short time. He later joined the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service becoming Director of Education.

Mr Prince Casinader SLEAS (Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service) became Principal in January 1975 and ran the school for the next 11 years. He joined the school as a seven- year old and on finishing his school education, he became a teacher there and finally was head of Central. He was a dynamic person with great distinction. The school underwent progress during his headship. The new two story Ault Memorial Block was constructed and more buildings were re-furbished during his leadership. The G.C.E. Advanced Level Science classes were also begun. The College band was started, directed by Mrs Navam Krishnapillai.

The writer Mr Samuel Arnold (**B Sc., Dip-in Ed.**) was his deputy until 1980 when he left for Zambia to take up a teaching position there

Mr Casinader on retirement, was elected as Member of Parliament for Batticaloa and supported the school in many ways. He continues to be a mentor to the Principals after him.

Mr A.A. Arulannarajah (B.Sc, Dip-in-Ed. SLEAS) was Principal from May 1987 to October 1994. Together with his Deputy Mr S. Punniyamoorthy, (First Class Trained) the school obtained support from the government to construct new science laboratories, the administration block and other facilities. In the GCE (Advanced Level)

Examination in 1988, the first student entered the Medical Faculty of the university obtaining highest marks in the Batticaloa District. More students entered Medical, Engineering and Management faculties of Universities.

To commemorate the 175th anniversary of the college (1814-1989), the government released a special postage stamp on 29 November 1989. The stamp had the picture of the founder Rev William Ault and the Ault building. An excellent magazine CENTRAL LIGHT was published which gave details of the past and present.

Mr K.G. Arulanantham BA, (First Class Trained) faithful alumnus and teacher at Central became the next Head of the school during the period October 1994 and April 2007. He continued to keep up the great heritage of the school along with his Deputy Mr I Kamalarajah (Special Physical Trained).

The Cartman Assembly Hall was opened on 30 January 1999 and named in honour of Rev. J. Cartman, the last missionary principal. On 30 June 2001, a unique event took place with the erection of



Hang in there!

Eleven people were hanging on a rope, under a helicopter. Ten men and one woman. The rope was not strong enough to carry them all, so they decided that one had to leave because otherwise they were all going to fall. They weren't able to choose that person, until the woman gave a very touching speech.

She said that she would voluntarily let go of the rope, because, as a woman, she was used to giving up everything for her husband and kids or for men in general, and was used to always making sacrifices with little return.

As soon as she finished her speech, all the men started clapping...

a monument in the town centre in memory of Rev. William Ault, the founder of MCC.

Bicentenary of Methodist Central

The present Principal Mr I Kamalarajah took over the leadership in August 2007. I visited MCC in 2011 and was impressed with this excellent institution. Batticaloa is blessed with tremendous advancement in the various schools. The Eastern University has diverse disciplines for tertiary education and the latest is the Medical Faculty with the Batti Teaching hospital. Students from the outskirts are in the town for education. The YMCA has plans to build a hostel to provide accommodation for University students.

This year Methodist Central will celebrate 200 years since its was founded by Rev. William Ault in 1814. It will indeed be an occasion for grateful reflections and joyous memories.



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Brush with death over Singapore

– the story of Sunethra Devi

by Roger Thiedeman

Sri Lanka's first national airline, Air Ceylon, began life in December 1947 with a small fleet comprising three Douglas DC-3 Dakota aircraft. When Air Ceylon was disbanded 32 years later, it boasted a fatality-free record, a distinction few airlines could claim then or now. But one of Air Ceylon's original trio of DC-3s came close to ruining that record – not once but twice – by the time the fledgling airline was scarcely two years old.

This is the story of that airplane, a Dakota named Sunethra Devi. Manufactured at the Douglas Aircraft Company's Oklahoma plant as a C-47A in wartime 1943, it was commissioned by the United States Air Force. After just three months with the Americans, the C-47 was assigned to a Middle East squadron of Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) in December 1943. It acquired the RAF serial number FL566 and the type-name 'Dakota', as British-owned Douglas C-47s were called.

By April 1944, Dakota FL566 had moved to another RAF squadron, this time in India. When the war ended just over a year later, like thousands of other Douglas C-47/Dakotas scattered across the world, it was placed on the surplus list. True enough, these were war-weary airplanes, but they had demonstrated their ruggedness and reliability in the cut-and-thrust of military operations. With not much required in the way of repair and renovation, the C-47s were ripe for picking by the multitude of new airlines taking wing in a global, post-war, commercial aviation boom.

And Air Ceylon was no exception. In early 1947, the former RAF Dakota identified as FL566 joined two other Douglas Dakotas, also sourced from surplus stocks in India, to form the nucleus of Ceylon's new national carrier. Re-designated as a DC-3 Dakota ('DC' stands for 'Douglas Commercial'), the airplane received the Ceylonese civil registration VP-CAT and was given the fleet name Sunethra Devi. For the record, the other two Air Ceylon Dakotas were named Sita Devi (VP-CAR) and Viharamaha Devi (VP-CAS). Later, in 1948, a DC-3 from Scotland boosted the fleet to four, and became Sri Lanka Devi (VP-CBA).

After Air Ceylon's inaugural flight by Sita Devi on 10 December 1947, its three DC-3s commenced duty on the new domestic and regional network. On 26 December, making a change from scheduled services, Sunethra Devi left Ratmalana on

a charter flight to the Indian subcontinent commanded by Capt. Peter Fernando and with Olga de Silva as stewardess. On board were Ceylon's Prime Minister-elect, D.S. Senanayake and the Minister for Transport and Works, John Kotelawala. Spanning several days,



• *Sunethra Devi with the crew prior to departure for Australia, (from left) John Vethavanam (Radio Officer); W.A.E. (Bunny) Molamure (Flight Engineer); Captain Peter Fernando; First Officer P.B. Mawalagedara (co-pilot); D.L. Sirimanne (Relief Radio Officer/Purser).*

the flight called in at Madras (now Chennai), Bombay (now Mumbai), Bhopal, Delhi and Karachi (in the newly-created Pakistan), for talks between Mr. Senanayake and Mr. Kotelawala and their Indian and Pakistani counterparts concerning air traffic rights between the respective countries.

Soon, 1947 gave way to 1948. On 4 February of the new year, just two months after giving birth to a new national airline, Ceylon was itself reborn as an independent nation. Prosperity and progress were uppermost in the nation's consciousness. In early 1948, the Fisheries Department purchased a 75-foot, 55-ton fishing trawler, the M.V. Halpha, from a company in Australia. But how would they get the boat from Australia to Ceylon?

Sri Lanka's new-found confidence and optimism provided the answer. The country now had a small but growing naval force, the Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (CRNVR), derived from men who had served during the war with Britain's Royal Navy, the Fleet Air Arm and the Ceylon Naval Volunteer Force. And didn't Ceylon also possess its own national airline? So why not use Air Ceylon to fly out a group of Ceylonese naval officers and other ranks to Sydney, where they would take over the trawler and sail it back on an 8,000-mile voyage to Colombo?

The prospect seemed daunting at first. For its part, Air Ceylon was just a small domestic and regional carrier. The airline was still at least nine months away from commencing long-haul international services using larger DC-4 Skymasters in collaboration with Australian National Airways (ANA). The naval personnel too had little experience of navigating vessels over vast expanses of ocean. But typical Ceylonese guts and determination won the day, and a decision to proceed was taken by the parties concerned.

The complement of naval passengers comprised Lt. Cmdr. Carl Ohlmus (in overall command of the team), Lt. Raja Proctor, Lt. Alan Caldera, Petty Officer (P/O) A.J. Fernando, P/O A.H. Poulter, Leading Seaman (L/S) A.A. Wise, Leading Telegraphist (L/Tel) H.P. Paulusz, Able Bodied Seaman (A/B) V.A.C. Fernando, Signalman (S/M) R.M.P.A. Ratnayake, and Cook Jinoris. A few civilians, euphemistically described as 'guests', would also go along for the ride.

Sunethra Devi was chosen for the Australian flight, its aircrew some of Air Ceylon's most experienced flyers of that time. The crew comprised Captain Peter Fernando; First Officer (co-pilot) P.B. Mawalagedera; Radio Officer John Vethavanam; Flight Engineer W.A.E. "Bunny" Molamure and relief Radio Officer/ Purser D.L. Srimanne

And so, the morning of Sunday 30 May 1948 saw Sunethra Devi being readied for departure on a flight that would prove longer, more adventurous and infinitely more arduous than anything it or its crew had previously undertaken. The Air Ceylon DC-3 would create history by becoming the first flight to land in Australia with an all-Asian crew in charge. Also, the first non-scheduled flight of any overseas airline to land at an Australian airport other than Darwin. However, that flight by Sunethra Devi nearly created history for the wrong reasons. But for the grace of God, it would have ended in disaster with the loss of all lives on board.

At 0745 hours on that historic May morning Sunethra Devi lifted off from Ratmalana and headed for her first stop, Madras. Reaching Madras at 1030, the DC-3 took on fuel and departed at 1115 on its next sector, a five-hour-plus flight to Calcutta. Here, aircraft, crew and passengers rested overnight ahead of an early take-off scheduled for 3.10 a.m. the next day. When Sunethra Devi left Calcutta's Dum Dum

airport at that ungodly hour, its passengers and crew were probably none too thrilled at being roused from comfortable beds for a pre-dawn departure. But at least the passengers could curl up in their seats and go back to sleep, lulled by the drone of the DC-3's twin engines. There was no such respite, however, for the Air Ceylon flight crew.

Sunethra Devi flew on to Rangoon (now Yangon) in Burma (now Myanmar). Arriving there at 0725 on 31 May, the passengers and crew had their breakfast, while the DC-3 was refuelled and prepared for what would be the longest sector of the trip. It was also the sector that almost ended in disaster for 'Sunethra Devi' and her human cargo.

At 0910 the DC-3 departed Rangoon, her fourth take-off for the trip so far. The next destination was Singapore, with an estimated arrival time of 1730 hours. But as the airplane flew on, conditions began deteriorating unexpectedly. Rangoon authorities had not forewarned Capt. Fernando of what he later described as "real dirty weather". With dense clouds and rain reducing visibility to zero, Fernando and Mawalagedera could now rely only on their instrument flying skills to keep the DC-3 on course. Strong headwinds and air currents, alternating between updrafts and downdrafts, made that task even harder as Sunethra Devi was buffeted and tossed

around like a leaf.

Then, lightning-induced static began interfering with radio communications to and from the aircraft. Worse still, it played havoc with the plane's navigation (direction-finding) equipment. Lacking reliable information, the pilots could no longer determine whether Singapore still lay ahead, or whether they had in fact overflown the 'Lion City'. To put it bluntly,

they were hopelessly lost.

As the DC-3 floundered around in the stormy skies, tension mounted in the cockpit and filtered through to the passengers too. The prospect of death loomed large. Sunethra Devi was in imminent danger of flying into a rain-shrouded hill, or crashing to earth after running out of fuel.

But at least one person on board could see a lighter side to the situation. Radio Officer Sirimanne, who was resting in the passenger cabin while Vethavanam manned the radio on the flight deck, takes up the story: Raja Proctor began handing out meals to the passengers, telling them: "This is your last supper. Enjoy it!" Then, at Vethavanam's request, I too

Strong headwinds and air currents, alternating between updrafts and downdrafts, made that task even harder as Sunethra Devi was buffeted and tossed around like a leaf.

entered the cockpit to lend assistance. We tried tuning various radio stations without success. Meanwhile, Peter Fernando was calling up Calcutta and Singapore, but their signals were very weak. Finally, he made contact with Singapore stating that our position was unknown. Occasionally, through a break in the clouds, we could glimpse the sea below, and hills to the left of the aircraft. Singapore air traffic control asked us to tune into a certain frequency and await instructions.

Then, like a godsend, they heard the voice of another pilot over the radio. Singapore had sent up an RAF aircraft to find and help the hapless DC-3. The unseen 'angel of mercy' told the Air Ceylon crew to tune their radio compass to another frequency. Guided by their instruments, and carefully following their invisible saviour's instructions, the pilots finally brought Sunethra Devi to a safe landing at Singapore's Changi airport in the gathering dusk and gloom. The time was 6.25 p.m., signifying that the plane had been airborne for a staggering 9 hours and 15 minutes. To further compound everyone's sense of relief, it was discovered that Sunethra Devi's gasoline tanks held sufficient fuel for only another 30 minutes of flying time.

Two days later, a chastened crew resumed their journey to Australia. They staged through Batavia (now Jakarta), Surabaya and Koepang, finally touching down on Australian soil, in Darwin, on Thursday, 3 June. Onwards again the following morning, across the harsh, endless Australian landscape, stopping at the Northern Territory outpost of Daly Waters. Then to Cloncurry and Charleville in Queensland before an overnight stop at Brisbane. Their final destination, Sydney, was reached on 5 June at 1240 hours.

No doubt the navy men disembarked with great relief. They were probably looking forward to returning to the sea, an element that was, to them, far more familiar and reassuring than the dangerous skies they had flown through over the past six days. As for the intrepid crew of Sunethra Devi, they commenced their return journey on the night of 10 June. The homeward route more or less mirrored the outbound one, except for a 36-hour pause (for rest and recreation?) on the idyllic island of Bali, and a night-stop at Bangkok instead of Rangoon. There was only one noteworthy event on the return flight. Sunethra Devi was compelled to circle Dum Dum airport, Calcutta for over an hour while an unserviceable aircraft was cleared off the runway. The delay extended their sector time (from Bangkok) to nearly eight hours.

When Sunethra Devi landed back at Ratmalana on the wet and windy afternoon of Thursday, 17 June, her crew were hailed as heroes. Their brush with death in the stormy skies over Singapore was now little more than a dim memory.

For the ill-fated DC-3, however, another appointment with danger was not all that far away.

Fifty years ago, the then national airline Air Ceylon was a thriving, buoyant outfit. After a quiet start in December 1947, two years later it was making steady progress not only as a domestic and regional carrier but on overseas routes too. In February 1949, Air Ceylon's fleet of four Douglas DC-3 Dakota aircraft had been augmented with the purchase of two



• *The Air Ceylon DC-3 Dakota 'Sunethra Devi'.*

large four-engine Douglas DC-4 Skymasters. Carrying the names Laxapana and Ratmalana, the pair of Skymasters began international services between Ceylon and Britain, a first for Lanka's fledgling airline.

These services were flown in partnership with Australian National Airways (ANA), a company with a sizeable DC-4 fleet of its own. In an agreement struck between the government of Ceylon and ANA, the Australian company promised technical and managerial assistance, and importantly, training of Ceylonese flight crew on its international services. History shows, however, that the Australians did not fulfill their agreement in its entirety. Even after Air Ceylon's international flights extended eastwards to Singapore, Jakarta and Australia in January 1950, only one Ceylonese pilot, Capt. Peter Fernando, was licenced on the DC-4; and that too in a supernumerary capacity as Second Officer.

ANA's influence in Air Ceylon was not confined to overseas operations. From early 1949 onwards, a few Australians occupied senior positions in the Lankan airline's hierarchy. Based in Colombo, W.W. Doyle served as Chairman, while Operations Manager was Capt. Peter Gibbes, a pilot with great skill and vast experience. Even today, Gibbes is fondly spoken of by former Air Ceylon pilots who flew DC-3s on domestic and regional services under his watchful supervision. They remember him as a stickler for operational correctness while remaining an amiable colleague.

But 1949, the year that began so optimistically for Air Ceylon, ended on an unhappy note. A few days before Christmas, one of the airline's quartet of Douglas DC-3 Dakotas crashed in controversial circumstances while landing at the south Indian city of Trichinopoly (alternatively 'Trichy' or Tiruchirapalli). The airplane in question was

none other than Sunethra Devi. Wearing registration letters VP-CAT, it was the same DC-3 that, in May of the previous year, lost its way in stormy skies over Singapore, endangering the lives of all on board.

In this latest misfortune to befall Sunethra Devi there was no loss of life. Miraculously, the most serious injuries sustained were a fractured skull and some broken bones. But for the ill-fated DC-3, it was the end of the line. Its fuselage shattered and scattered, six-year-old Sunethra Devi would never fly again, her remnants destined for the scrapheap.

Sunethra Devi's last flight began routinely enough. A cool, refreshing pre-Christmas breeze caressed the airfield as the DC-3 took off from Ratmalana on the morning of Wednesday 21 December, nearly 50 years ago to the day. The plane's first destination was Kankasanturai (KKS), aerial gateway to Sri Lanka's northern city of Jaffna. The crew consisted of Capt. Dixon Kotelawala, First Officer (co-pilot) Simon Rasiah, Radio Officer Hector Fernando and air hostess Raneer Ranawake (later Mrs. Raneer Raymond). Dixon Kotelawala began his aviation career as an Assistant Aerodromes Officer at Ratmalana. He later joined Air Ceylon as a First Officer on DC-3s, and not long before this fateful flight, had been appointed as Captain.

But back to that flight aboard Sunethra Devi... KKS was reached without incident in just under 90 minutes. Here, while the DC-3 rested, the crew breakfasted at the airport cafeteria. One imagines that typically northern fare such as stringhoppers, thosai and vadai would have featured on the menu. Then, with plane, passengers and crew suitably revitalised, Sunethra Devi's doors were shut, engines started and brakes released for the next leg to Trichy, 55 minutes away.

Somewhere between KKS and Trichy, the hitherto even tenor of Sunethra Devi's flight seemingly began to go amiss. According to press reports following the crash, a passenger claimed that one of the engines "gave trouble soon after the plane took off from Jaffna". This seemed to corroborate Capt. Kotelawala's subsequent statement that "the engine stalled just before the plane was to land". Whatever the cause, as Sunethra Devi commenced its descent into Trichy around 1.30 p.m., it was obvious that all was not right with the DC-3. Another passenger, Dr. G. Wignarajah, a regular traveller on that route, noticed that the plane was being flown erratically. He watched in consternation as the aircraft narrowly escaped collision with Trichy Rock, a landmark some seven miles from the airport.

At Trichy airfield itself, some observers said the DC-3 appeared to come in too fast. Others noted that the left wing was tilted downwards, and not in a level altitude. But all eyewitnesses agreed that the plane touched down heavily, then bounced before crashing nose first onto the grass surrounding the

runway. The left landing gear also slammed into the ground with a fearsome thud, the wheel collapsing under the force of impact.

Missing one of its two main wheels, the lopsided Dakota careered along the grass until the drooping left wing dug in and spun the plane around in a sharp left-hand turn through 180 degrees. Meanwhile, the left propeller had broken away. Now, as the crippled aircraft swung around, the right wheel and engine too were wrenched off and flung some distance from the fuselage. Finally, after what seemed an eternity, a battered and broken Sunethra Devi slowed to a halt. A small fire broke out but was quickly extinguished by the airport fire brigade. The second heavy impact had inflicted horrendous damage on the nose section and cockpit area. Rescuers rushing up to the wreck expected the worst. But, mercifully, the crew were alive. Dixon Kotelawala had superficial injuries to his head, chin and ribs, although Simon Rasiah, the co-pilot, was not so lucky. He had suffered a fractured skull and broken a forearm. Back in the passenger cabin, stewardess Raneer Ranawake sustained a broken collarbone when she unwisely unbuckled her seatbelt after the first bounce to look out at what was happening, and was thrown on her side. Also injured was passenger C.V. Ramaswamy Reddiar, who fractured his nasal bone. As often happens in such circumstances, there were tales of heroism as human courage triumphed over adversity.

One report told how Capt. Kotelawala had leapt out of his seat as soon as the plane stopped, then raced back into the passenger cabin to open the main door. This was not before three passengers had broken open a window, crawled through the gap, and were trying to open the door from the outside so that others could evacuate the stricken plane.

When news of the crash reached Colombo, another DC-3 was hurriedly despatched from Ratmalana to Trichy. At the controls were Air Ceylon's 'Aussie' Operations Manager Capt. Peter Gibbes and First Officer George Ferdinand. Also on board were several investigators headed by the Department of Civil Aviation's Chief Inspector of Accidents, Ron Godlieb. Returning to Colombo the next day, the relief plane brought back Sunethra Devi's injured crew members (except co-pilot Rasiah, who was admitted to the Trichy hospital), passengers from the crashed aircraft, and others who were booked to fly back to Colombo on Sunethra Devi.

Describing the crash scene many years later, George Ferdinand recalled that a fuselage panel adjacent to the Radio Officer's position had been torn off, exposing a gaping hole in the side of the plane. When firefighters reached the wreck, they liberally sprayed Hector Fernando from outside with a mixture of water and foam as he still sat stunned in his seat. The official inquiry considered the suggestion



Meals Ammi Made

KOOL SOUP

by Shivahari Sellamuttu

"Kool" is a traditional Jaffna seafood soup usually enjoyed at Sunday lunch.

INGREDIENTS:

4 litres water
500g medium green prawns, de-veined
1 kg red Mullet fish, cut into cubes
1 fish head for the stock
½ kg squid tubes cut into 2.5 cm pieces
1 kg blue Swimmer crab, or use soft shell crabs broken into bite-size pieces (use the shell for stock)
1 bunch long green beans (snake beans), diced into 2.5 cm pieces
1 bunch English spinach, chopped coarsely
1 cup long grain rice
10 dried chillies with seeds
Chilli powder to taste
1 teaspoon turmeric powder
2 sprigs fresh curry leaves
3 teaspoons coriander seeds
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
1 teaspoon black pepper coarsely ground
250 g young jackfruit (fresh jackfruit is available from

The story of Sunethra Devi (continued)

that Sunethra Devi had engine trouble that day. Significantly, however, it found that the aircraft was being flown, and the landing attempted, by co-pilot Simon Rasiah.

Nothing unusual about that, except that the recently-promoted Kotelawala, although now a Captain, was not yet permitted to let his co-pilots carry out take-offs and landings. Only senior Captains were authorised to conduct in-flight training of co-pilots. And that, it seems, is how Air Ceylon lost the first of two aircraft during its 32-year existence (the second, an Avro 748, was destroyed by a bomb in 1978 but again with no loss of lives). For Sunethra Devi it was the end of a colourful military and commercial career that began just six years before.

Footnote 1: Dixon Kotelawala was later appointed Director of Civil Aviation. His cousin, Sir John Kotelawala, was Prime Minister of Ceylon at the time.

(This article, published here in full, first appeared in two instalments in the Sri Lanka Sunday Times on 12 December 1999.)

Asian supermarkets)

1 large Spanish onion OR white onion
4 cloves garlic, ground to a fine paste
2.5 cm piece fresh ginger, ground to a fine paste
1 tablespoon tamarind pulp
3 tablespoons Palmyra root flour soaked in 4 cups of cold water
Salt to taste

METHOD:

Peel and devein prawns, and cut fish into cubes. Break crab into bite size portions. Squid cut into small rings. Retain the heads and shells of prawns, crabs and the fish head for stock, and place in a large saucepan, adding ginger and garlic paste and salt. Stir and simmer over a low heat for an hour, strain stock through a fine sieve into large clean pot. Soak Palmyra root flour in 4 cups of water for 30 minutes, and rinse until water is clear. Dry roast coriander seeds, cumin seeds, black peppercorns until golden and dry chillies are crisp and fragrant. Grind the above spices in a grinder or blender, adding onions to make a smooth paste, fold in the Palmyra flour into the paste and season with salt. Add the ground paste into seafood stock over medium heat, adding rice, fresh curry leaves and chilli powder according your taste, and stir. Allow to cook for a further 15 minutes or until rice is almost cooked, next add green beans, jack fruit and prepared seafood. Stir through and slow cook for 10 minutes. Finally add spinach, season with salt, pepper, and tamarind pulp to taste.

Send us your recipes

Readers are invited to submit their favourite recipes for publication in this column. Preferably your recipes will be simple and easy to prepare. They must be of Sri Lankan origin and as this is a family-orientated column, we suggest that your recipes be of meals you learnt to prepare from your Ammi or Achchi.

So why wait? Send those mouth-watering recipes to the editor without delay.



Congratulations & a Warm Welcome to our New Members

Jeevam & Ushi William, Warrawee, NSW.
Balasuperamianam & Barbara Ramachandra, Queenscliff, NSW.
Hugh Cecil Aldons, Springvale South VIC.
Mrs Dilkie Pereira NSW.



Victor & Esther Melder celebrate a Golden life together

On Saturday, 18 January, Victor and Esther (June) Melder celebrated 50 years of a Golden life together shared in Sri Lanka and later in Australia. Devout Catholics both of them, their golden day started with Holy Mass in their own home, celebrated by Fr. Chinua Okeke Oraeki CSSp. the parish priest of St Dominic's in Broadmeadows. This was followed by an informal lunch. The family will host them to dinner later in the week.

The romance of Victor Melder and Esther (June) Dunsford began just like any other love story. Victor was an Apprentice Engine Driver with the Ceylon Government Railway (CGR) and was stationed at the Dematagoda Running Shed in Colombo. His parents were residing at Bandarawela, where his father was a CGR Engine Driver.

Now Esther's father Roy Dunsford, also a railwayman (retired) and an Engine Driver to boot. Her family also resided at Bandarawela, where Esther worked at the Millers department store.

As fate (or Cupid) would have it, one day in 1960, Victor was visiting his parents and that was when the dashing railway engine driver laid eyes on the stunning Esther Dunsford. Seems they were meant for each other and after a courtship of four years, they married on 18 January 1964, at All Saints Church, Borella.

Before they could savour their life together for too long, Victor, now a qualified Engine Driver, was transferred to Galle immediately after their wedding.

While living in the historic southern city of Galle, Victor and Esther were blessed with a baby girl, Frances and later, in due course, a son Richard. On 31 December 1967, Victor resigned from the CGR. The family decided to seek greener pastures Down Under and migrated to Melbourne, Australia



• Victor and Esther with a group of priests and guests at the Golden Wedding Mass at home.



on 13 March, 1968 and have been residents here since then, making their home in the suburb of Broadmeadows.

Since making Australia 'home' they had three more additions to the family - another daughter Dianne and two more sons Keith and Glen. Today,



• At their 25th Wedding Anniversary (from left, top) Frances, Dianne, Richard, Esther, Keith, Victor (centre) and Glen (bottom).

the family has been extended further with seven grandchildren; the eldest, Madeleine, is 21 years of age and the youngest, Matilda, three years old.

In Melbourne, Victor was employed by the Victorian Public Service at the Department of Conservation as a Projects Officer and retired in 1993,

after 25 years of service. Esther never worked, she played the role of the Sri Lankan mother, a stay at home carer for our five children.

Both Esther and Victor are devoted Catholics



• As members of the Community of the Sons & Daughters of God at St Dominic's Catholic Parish in Broadmeadows.

and attend Mass daily. They are also committed members of St Dominic's Catholic Parish and some ten years ago they 'discovered' the Community of the Sons & Daughters of God, a Monastic and Contemplative Public Association in the parish. The spirituality and commitment of the Community appealed to them and they became Aspirants and have now progressed further and both have taken vows of poverty, obedience and chastity in the community.

Unique legacy

Although Victor migrated to Australia 45 years ago, unlike many Sri Lankan expatriates, he has never been back to visit the land of his birth. "I cannot go back to a place I haven't left," Victor says. "I am here only physically; I'm there in spirit and still traverse those beaten tracks."

Victor did something remarkable after his arrival here. In 1968, Victor found that many Australians knew little or nothing about Sri Lanka and many questions were posed to him that Victor could scarcely find answers to. Aided by an unabashed love, admiration and respect for the beautiful island, Victor was determined to share with the Australians, the rich and diverse heritage, history and culture dating back more than 2 500 years.

It was this mixture that brought about the birth in Melbourne, in 1968, of the "Victor Melder Sri Lanka Library" – perhaps the only one of its kind anywhere outside Sri Lanka. He had brought with him only one book relating to his motherland when he

came to Australia, but today, this unique library has more than 4 600 books, 2000 magazines and journals (including *The Ceylankan*) Sunday newspapers of Sri Lanka covering 25 years and a collection of video and audio tapes on topics relating to every aspect of Sri Lankan life. Today, the library has become a source of research and scholarship to hundreds of students from primary, secondary and tertiary institutions and other adults alike seeking deeper study of the island country.

This vast collection was accumulated with a lot of help from friends both in Sri Lanka and Australia. He also bought many books himself in this time, but since his retirement from employment 18 years ago, he depends on donations from individuals and organisations to assist him.

Numerous authors writing books on Sri Lanka use resources of the Melder Library for research purposes. Paul Croucher, an Australian Buddhist who wrote *A History of Buddhism in Australia 1848-1988* was one such. Currently two Australians are using the library for novels they are writing with a Sri Lankan background. A number of schools invite Victor to display Sri Lankan artefacts at their 'open days', he also visits schools, groups, clubs and organisations giving talks on Sri Lanka and also arranges video and slide displays.

Victor's proudest possession is a copy of *Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*, which was donated to the library by the Rev. Galaboda Sri Gnanissara Thero of the Gangaramaya Temple, Colombo. Another is the entire collection of the Dutch Burgher Union journal issued since 1908 to date, all in bound volumes. These journals, along with the indexes of the Wolvendaal Church, Baptism and Marriage records (which the library has), help those doing genealogical research into their family history. The library also has copies of two volumes of the Dutch Company Servants in Ceylon.

The services of the library are entirely free. The only charge levied is on those writing a thesis or dissertation etc. who are required that a copy of their writings be lodged with the library. The entire library has been bequeathed by Victor in his Last Will to Melbourne's Monash University, where it will not only be preserved for posterity but used by those seeking material and information on Sri Lanka.

In 1993, the Government of Sri Lanka bestowed on Victor the National Title 'Sri Lanka Ranjana', in recognition of his then 25 years' meritorious service to Sri Lanka in Australia. This is something which Victor cherishes very much, for he states "to be honoured by one's Motherland is the highest accolade a man can receive".

The entire collection of books so far in the library, have been catalogued and is on the library website www.vmsl-library.com and currently, the many articles in journals and magazines in the library are being catalogued.

Sir Emerson Tennent - a controversial Colonial Secretary

by Vama Vamadevan

Sir Emerson Tennent's monumental work, his magnum opus, is his book *Ceylon, An Account of The Island, Physical, Historical & Topographical* (1850). It is said of his book '...No book can compare (with this book)... in sheer comprehensiveness and in encyclopaedic nature of its content. Nothing like it has been written on Sri Lanka in any language by any other writer either before or since. It gave in a concise and precise form everything there has to be known and was known of Sri Lanka up to the middle of the 19th Century when the book was published'. So describes S.D.Sapramadu, historian and publisher in his introduction to the sixth edition. Tennent was a fascinating personality. He was an erudite scholar but a poor administrator who was unpopular and left Ceylon in ignominy. It took over a century for the people of Ceylon to know and appreciate his remarkable contribution.

The first edition of his book was published in 1859, merely nine years after his return from Ceylon in 1850. The same year two more editions had to be published to cope with the demand. There were two editions after that in 1860. Five editions being sold out in nine months is an all time record by any standard. A sixth edition came out in 1977. Very few books can boast of such sales before or since his time.

This eminent writer was born on 7 August, 1804 in Belfast, Ireland. He was the third son of William Emerson, a Belfast merchant. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin from where he obtained an LL.D. While he was very young, he took part in the Greek War of Independence. Later he was called to the British Bar at Lincoln's Inn but did not seem to have practiced law. He was elected to the House of Commons as a member for Belfast in 1832 where he proved to be one of the ablest debaters of the time. In 1842, he became Secretary of the India Board and was knighted in 1845. But, being a devout Catholic, he saw no future for himself in Belfast and applied for the post of Colonial Secretary in Ceylon and received appointment.

He married Letitia, the daughter of William Tennent, a wealthy Belfast merchant who died of cholera in 1832. Young Emerson added his father-in-

law's family name to his own by Royal license and came to be known as Emerson Tennent.

He arrived in Ceylon in 1845 and had expectations of succeeding Sir Colin Campbell as Governor on the latter's retirement. As he started his administration, he had to face up to the rebellion of 1848. These social upheavals were caused at that time in Ceylon by unforeseen factors, such as the failure of the coffee industry and the economic depression. His appointment also earned for him the ire of the senior members of the Ceylon Civil Service (CCS) who felt they had been overlooked for this plum office for which they considered themselves more eligible. This may have been the cause at the root of all the problems he had in his administration, which in the end led to his downfall and subsequent recall.

Tennent in the aftermath of the rebellion of 1848 turned out to be a dismal failure as an administrator. If his appointment to Ceylon as Colonial Secretary was controversial, his departure was even more so. He was no stranger to controversy in much of his lifetime in Ceylon and back home in England. If his reputation as an administrator took a nosedive, his work "CEYLON" redeemed his reputation instantaneously as a scholar and the foremost authority on Ceylon.

Some of Tennent's detractors in Ceylon included Bishop Chapman who compared Tennent to a cobra and declared "...he is speckled externally but with abundant venom within." He was also criticised for accepting gifts from his subordinates. An amusing story gained currency at the time that a merchant is believed to have promised Tennent some 'Bombay Ducks' and Tennent spent money and prepared accommodation for the birds not knowing what Bombay Ducks were. When the man arrived with the gifts at his Ellie House residence in Mutwal, it turned out to be a large dried salted fish known as Bombay Ducks. It is hardly possible to believe the story about a man who authored the Natural History of Ceylon. Perhaps such stories gained currency as gossip to discredit an unpopular administrator. Success they say depends on how many enemies one has than friends. If that is true Tennent's career in Ceylon seems to be the best illustration.

Tennent's appointment as Colonial Secretary was immensely resented by the higher echelons of the then CCS. Tennent recognised this as family bandyism and referred to this group as the 'Family Compact'. He claimed that F. Templer, District Judge of Colombo was married to a cousin of P.E.

Lead me from death to life, from falsehood to truth.
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust.
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace.
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.

— Satish Kumar - *Prayer for Peace* (1981) adapted from the Upanishads

Wodehouse, and that C.R.Bulner and P.A.Dyke as nephews of F.Templer. He also recognised a Layard branch of the 'Family Compact' working against him. This included Lanyard's brother-in-law F.Gibson, Assistant Colonial Secretary; T.Gibson, DJ Badulla; Pole, Police Magistrate Jaffna and Moyart, also Police Magistrate and F.Layard a nephew and also Police Magistrate of Matara. Usually the job of Colonial Secretary was given to the most senior member of the CCS. Tennent's appointment direct from England attracted the antagonism of the 'Family Compact'. P.E.Wodehouse who was Assistant Colonial Secretary was the favourite of the 'Family Compact'. Some of his antagonists were themselves no paragons of virtue and were the best argument for birth control.

With such opposition to his administration within the CCS, the revolt of 1848 was Tennent's undoing. The revolt was sparked off *inter alia* by the heavy gun tax levied on the poor people. The reverberations of this revolt were felt even in Great Britain leading to the fall of the British cabinet of Earl Russell, the Prime Minister

While in Ceylon, Tennent took an interest in the study of Hinduism and Buddhism. He was a fervent supporter of the Christian missionaries and was convinced that Hinduism was vulnerable to the assault of modern science. He therefore poured scorn on Hinduism in his writings. He had less criticism of Buddhism and thought Christianity had a bigger problem breaking through Buddhism in its propagation. He also refers to nominal Christians as 'Christian Buddhists' or 'Government Christians'. He had contempt for such religionists and says they were an outrage to the religion into which they were born and an insult to that which they proclaim they have adopted.

After his return from Ceylon, he published his first book Christianity in Ceylon a sketch of the Brahmanical and Buddhist Superstitions. In 1861 he reprinted a part of his work *Sketches of the Natural History of Ceylon* (1861). Another book he brought out *The Wild Elephant, method of capturing and taming in Ceylon*. His interests and writings were not confined to Ceylon alone. Much earlier he took up the cause of Greek Independence and travelled in Greece extensively. He later published three books *A Picture of Greece* (1826), *Letters from the Aegean* (1829) and a *History of Modern Greece* (1830). Wherever he worked and travelled he took an academic interest in that country. His brief stay in Greece resulting in three books on that country is good proof of this. His interests were not confined to Ceylon and Greece. He wrote on Belgium in 1840 and a book *Wine-its Duties and Taxation* (1855). He was a contributor to magazines and a frequent correspondent to *Notes and Queries*. Apart from books he was the brain behind some Acts of Parliament such as the Copyright Designs Act of 1842, which are milestones

in the constitutional development of the mother of Parliaments and Commonwealth Governments.

In his political complexion he was first a Whig, but was espoused by the conservatives in his election to Belfast. His political mentor was Lord Stanley. Tennent later claimed that the Whigs never forgave him for his defection and had their revenge when his controversial service in Ceylon came before the British Parliament. He had to switch parties to steer through his own problems in the treacherous waters of national politics.

On his return from Ceylon to Ireland in 1850 after five years' service Tennent lived on the estate that came to him through his marriage into the Tennent family—the Tempo Manor in the countryside of Fermanagh in North Ireland. The house was designed by Sir Charles Lanyon, a renowned architect of the time. His family consisted of his wife Letitia, two daughters and a son. Tennent died suddenly in London on the 6 March 1869 at the age of 69. The son was (later Sir William Emerson Tennent and Baronet 1855 – 1876) an official of the Board of Trade, after whose death the Baronetcy became extinct.

Socially, Tennent was a friend of literary and artistic people of the day. Among them were Charles Dickens and Lord Byron. His friends holidayed with Tennent at the Tempo Manor. In recognition of his illustrious career, his portrait adorns the Belfast City Council. In Ceylon, Tennent will be remembered for his monumental book CEYLON- a nugget of historical gold.

Reference: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka* (new Serial Vol.: XLI), Special number of Memorial lecture, 1995 – 1996.

Sapramadu, S.D.: Introduction to the sixth edition of Tennent's book CEYLON.

Udugama, Sujatha: Tennent – his actions led to the fall of a British Government. (The Island of 30.5.80).

Simpson, Joe: Emerson Tennent, Portrait and Added Information (Unpublished).

Did you know that ...

... DRAWING ROOMS were actually 'Withdrawing Rooms', where people withdrew into after having had their dinner. Later, the prefix 'with' was dropped.

... TIPS come from 'To Insure Prompt Service'. In the old days, in order to get prompt service from the servants at inns, travelers used to drop coins in a box, on which was written, 'To Insure Prompt Service'. This gave rise to the custom of tips.

... JEEP is a vehicle, with a unique gear system. It was invented during World War II (1939-1945). It was named 'General Purpose Vehicle' (GP for short). GP was changed into JEEP, much later.

... COCA-COLA was originally green in colour.

... The strongest muscle in the body is the TONGUE.

Synopsis of Meeting Melbourne 17 November 2013

Stefan D'Silva spoke on "Places Once Denied" based on his third publication of the same title, which was launched during the evening. Stefan had travelled to Puttalam, then to the Western coast and through to the South East coast of Sri Lanka after the war ended. The images shown illustrating his talk are from the book. The cover of the book displays a young man fishing in the Jaffna lagoon at sunset which is a strong indication that hostility there has ended.

During the journey through Jaffna on to Kayts, one can see flat, arid land with a unique beauty with its connections to ancient fishing industry. At the Jaffna lagoon, traditional Tamil fishing crafts or *vallam* were located. Many people have not visited the Northern Sri Lanka and Stefan highly recommended visiting the lagoon which has an ambience all its own. Paying attention to detail while travelling here can create an interesting experience he stated.

East of Elephant Pass at Chundikkalum, fishing and life in general, have recovered. Water birds and a nature park are major attractions. A beautiful part of the world, Kayts has its own hierarchy between mainland and the islands. Point Pedro means a sandy point in old Portuguese. Throughout his travels, Stefan had witnessed progress and development in the Northern part of Sri Lanka and the life is recovering slowly.

The Poonaryn Fort is situated at the Western side of Jaffna lagoon. Arid land with good marine life can be observed here. Photos of daily life in Jaffna were displayed. In the Northern and Southern provinces the act of giving water to travellers by using a *diyakinissa* or *pinthaliya* reflects the ancient hydraulic history. Roadside trading is a common practice in Sri Lanka. A photo showed this taking place at Punani near the Polonnaruwa- Pasikuda road, where fishermen were selling their catch of the day.

In Northern and East, fishing is a large industry utilising a variety of methods in very hot conditions. In Trincomalee *vallam* and fibre glass boats are common. The famous Keerimalai baths steeped in legend is located at Kankesanthurai. Photos showed the colourful Nalluru and Thai Pongal festivals. Jaffna Fort is restored by a joint project between Dutch and Sri Lankan governments.

At Kilinochchi an orphanage, built like a kovil, was commenced by a British lady and it is helping the recovery of the community. The grave sites of Buddhist disciples who were said to have arrived in Sri Lanka with Buddha are located at Kantharodei. Dambakolapatuna is known in history where Devi Sanghamitta landed with a sapling of the Bo tree, which is now at Anuradhapura. Ferries have been replaced by modern bridges.

The Pasikuda beach is famous for its pristine beauty. The ancient temple of a Thousand Pillars is known as the Koneswaran temple. Swami Rock is connected to Ramayan legend. Famous photographer Eric Swan was killed by an elephant at Somawathi Chaitya, north of Polonnaruwa. The site is now open to the public.

Vatadage temple, built during 12th century near Trincomalee, is now accessible. Arriving at Buttala, in the Wellawaya area one can visit the stupa said to be built in memory of Vihara Mahadevi at Yudaganava which is off the much travelled sites. Stefan recently visited Warakapola, a cave complex where King Valagamba stabled his tusker, now under archaeological examination. Pokunuthanna in the Uva Wellassa basin is a magnificent gully showcasing its unique beauty.

Slides of all the places described above were shown during the presentation.

Presently Stefan is visiting rural Sri Lanka and photographing changes there. He emphasises the changes in rural life there with the introduction of electricity and new roads. Stefan has discovered the contrast in vegetation and climatic conditions between North and South of Sri Lanka. Near Kadugannawa, Stefan and his team were amazed to see a giant earth worm.

Stefan's book "Places Once Denied" was launched and copies were on sale.

The second speaker, Dr Harin Dias spoke on how to take good photos using modes other than the automatic mode in your camera and his talk was accompanied by a slide show. Photography is a passion for Harin, who recently held an exhibition at Lionel Wendt Theatre in Sri Lanka. Four main items relating to photography were discussed, namely Aperture, F-stop, Focal length, Shutter Speed and ISO. Four categories of cameras are Point and shoot camera, SLR, Zoom camera and Panoramic camera were explained. Choice of your photographic equipment will depend on your budget, your level of enthusiasm and your weight requirements. Harin displayed his own photograph of a Great White Shark at Point Lincoln and a white shark at Tonga.

Sri Lankan dancers, a raffle draw and a trivia quiz and many books and paintings on display, added sparkle to the evening. A sumptuous Sri Lankan buffet dinner followed.

- Dilhani Kumbukkage

I have noticed that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.

E.V. Lucas - 365 Days and One More (1926) p277

* * * *

In violence, we forget who we are.

Mary McCarthy - On the Contrary (1961)

From the portfolio, more photographs
of CSA's annual function
(also see backcover)







SYDNEY

23 February 2014

The First General Meeting of the Ceylon Society of Australia for 2014 will take place on Sunday 23 February 2014 commencing at 6.30 pm at the Pennant Hills Community Centre, Ramsay Road, Pennant Hills, NSW 2120. Please note the venue. Ramsay Road is off Yarrara Road and the venue is opposite the Pennant Hills Railway Station. The entrance to the building is from the car park at the back of the building. Members and their Guests are welcome.

Basil Wright and his film *Song of Ceylon* (1934)

This one hour long program will consist of three parts as follows: • A short talk by Thiru Arumugam about Basil Wright and his career and how *Song of Ceylon* was sponsored, how it was filmed and made and the significant role played by Lionel Wendt in making the film. • Screening of Basil Wright's film *Negombo Coast* (1934). This short film is about the life and work of the fisher folk of Duwa in Negombo. When Basil Wright handed over the finished four-part film *Song of Ceylon* to the UK sponsors they told him that what they wanted was not an art film but four short films suitable for screening in schools. So Basil Wright went back to the cutting floor and out of the 23,000 feet of film that he shot in Ceylon, he edited four short films of which *Negombo Coast* is one. This film was relatively recently released by the British Film Institute, the remaining three films have not been released. • Screening of Basil Wright's classic documentary film *Song of Ceylon* (1934). This film is considered to be a landmark film in the history of British documentary films and used several innovative techniques which have now become commonplace. The audio track consists mainly of narration by Lionel Wendt of excerpts from Robert Knox's Historical Relation of Ceylon (1681). The famous author and film critic, Graham Greene, has described the film as probably the finest British documentary film made up to that time. At the International Film Festival held in Brussels in 1935, *Song of Ceylon* won not only the award for the Best Documentary Film but also the award for the Best Film in all classes.

Even if you have seen the film before, it is worth seeing it again as you may see it in a different light. One of the "criticisms" of the film was that it has to be seen more than once to be truly appreciated.

Basil Wright has said that out of the 25 films that he made, *Song of Ceylon* is the only film that he does not mind seeing over and over again!

Social: After a brief discussion period, the usual Social will follow. Those who are able to are please requested to bring a plate of non-sweet savoury finger-food. Please avoid cakes with icing as the general preference is for plain cakes, sandwiches and savoury pastries. To avoid duplication of items, please contact our Social Convener, Chandra Senaratne on (02) 9872 6826. A donation to CSA to help defray meeting costs, which could be made at the meeting, is an alternative.

Colombo Chapter

Mr. STEFAN D' SILVA

will speak and present a slide show on

"Places Once Denied & Serendipitous Travel"

The accessibility of the areas once affected by the conflict holds the interest of many and in addition to that there are many 'off the beaten track' areas that most people living Colombo have not seen – nor heard of.

STEFAN attended the prestigious private school St. Thomas College, Mount Lavinia and migrated to Australia in April 1977 at the age of twenty one. He became fascinated with the diversity of wildlife in Sri Lanka around the age of five. Determined to capture the essence of Sri Lanka's wild life diversity on film, he started off with a 35mm camera in 1979. Somewhat unsatisfied with his early efforts he then dabbled in videotaping wildlife in the jungles of Sri Lanka over the next seven years. He returned to still photography in earnest in 1998. Commenting on his passion for wildlife, Stefan asserts "I am certainly not in the league of the professional photographer; I am just an amateur enthusiast, with a lot to learn, who enjoys photographing wildlife in a beautiful, complex and exotic land". In his new book "Sri Lanka – A way of Life" Stefan states "I have chosen to travel and photograph in places that fill my soul as opposed to places that merely fill my vision....."

Questions and discussion will follow.

Date: Friday 07th March 2014 at 5.30 p.m

Venue: The Organisation of Professional Associations (OPA), 275/75, Prof. Stanley Wijesundera Mawatha, (off Baudhaloka Mawatha), Colombo 7

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BOOKSHOP

This is a regular column for the benefit of members (& others) who author books or have books, maps & other collectibles and would like the Society to promote these materials on their behalf. No charges apply to members, **but donations are encouraged from all using this service.** Regrettably, items can be listed only in three (3) consecutive issues. Please contact the editor for further details.

BOOKS & PAMPHLETS FOR SALE

Available from Gillian Branagan

The Polonnaruwa Period... ed S D Saparamadu... publishers Tisara Prakasakayo (1973); **Veddhas in Transition** by Nandadeva Wijesekera, publishers M D Gunasena & Co Ltd (1964); **The Kandyan Kingdom of Sri Lanka** by L S Dewaraja, publisher Lake House Investments; **The Rifle & Hound in Ceylon** by Samuel Baker, publisher Tisara Prakasakayo (1970); **History of Ceylon** by Father S.G. Perera SJ publisher Lake House Colombo; **My Personal Ark** by A N Weinman, publisher Lake House (1968); **A sketch of the constitution of the kandyan Kingdom** by Sir J D'oyly, publisher Tisara Prakasakayo (1975); **Early Sinhalese Sculpture** by Nandadeva Wijesekera, publisher Gunasena (1962).

Each of the above priced at \$2 a copy.

The following pamphlets by Archaeological Department, Ceylon and are priced at \$1 each

Ancient city of Anuradhapura by W B Marcus Fernando; **Polonnaruwa; Medawala Vihara Frescoes; Polonnaruwa Bronzes; Buddha Statues; Terracotta Heads; Murals at Tivanka Pilimage; Sinhalese Dance & Music; Panavitiya Ambalama Carvings; Guardstones; Sinhalese Doorways; Moonstones.**

Contact Gillian Branagan by email, phone (02 99587127) or she can bring them to the Sydney meeting on 23 February.

THE FOLLOWING BOOKS BY E.C.T. CANDAPPA FOR SALE

First Born, a collection of religious and secular poems. \$5.00

A Cage Of Her Own, A collection of short stories. \$5.00

Headlines & Deadlines, a memoir of the author's Fifty Years in journalism, \$25.00

Something Personal & O Little Town, two Nativity Plays \$5.00.

Postage & Handling \$5.00. The lot \$40.00 inclusive of postage.

Available with the author. Please phone (03) 9795 5960 or write, 13 Prospect Hill Crescent, North Dandenong, VIC 3175.

BENJAMIN BAILEY'S POETICAL SKETCHES OF THE ISLAND OF CEYLON 1841

- Dr Rajpal K de Silva.

A few new copies of this book released in 2011 are available for sale. It is a 348-page hard bound book consisting of the poems published by Benjamin Bailey with notes and a critique by Dr de Silva.

Price A\$40 plus mailing charges calculated at cost.

Inquiries from Hugh on: karu@internode.net.au

Phone: 02 94026342.

JOURNAL REPRINTS

Wish to bring your collection of THE CEYLANKAN up-to-date? Yes you can! Reprints and some back issues of the Journal are available in limited quantities. The cost to members is \$7.50 per copy. Non-members pay \$10.00 per issue. This does not include postage and handling. P&H within Australia is \$5.00; Asia/Pacific \$10.00; rest of the world \$15.00 per package of up to 5 issues. Contact Hugh Karunanayake Int. + 61 2 9402 6342 or karu@internode.net.au

Our library

The CSA library has a few books, numerous periodicals and copious newsletters and pamphlets relating to Sri Lanka. At the last count, the CSA can boast of owning the following books:

- Savage Sanctuary by R.L. Spittel
- F.L. Woodward - Out of his life & thought by D.H. Panditha Gunewardene
- Sirimavo Bandaranaike by Maureen Seneviratne
- Colonial Kollupitiya and Its Environs by H.M. Mervyn Herath
- Monarchs of Sri Lanka by H.M. Mervyn Herath
- The Netherlands-Ceylon Heritage by E. Jongens
- The History of the Nugegoda Methodist Church by Shirley Somanader
- Headlines & Deadlines - Jottings of a Journal by E.C.T. Candappa
- Banking & Business in Sri Lanka by V.S. Nadaraja.

Some of these books have been donated by the authors at a book launch held at a CSA public meeting and others through their goodwill.

OUR SPONSORS

The cost of production of this journal is supported by generous donations from the

• *Lions Club of Bankstown, NSW, Australia, courtesy of Lion Harry de Sayrah, OAM JP; and • Universal Magazines Pty Ltd of North Ryde NSW 2113.*



Ceylon Society AGM, Annual Dinner & Sing-along

While 135 members and guests were entertained to some old time music by Monty, The Pacemaker, Thiru Arumugam had them pondering over answers to his customary trivia quiz based on articles published in 2013 issues of the CSA journal, The Ceylankan. Dinner was delicious and plentiful and the demand for the caterer's business card may well be called 'ravenous'.

Post-dinner sing-along conducted by Hyacinth Jones on the piano was a crowd-pleaser with most people, as someone observed, "willing to stay on even after the last song was sung". Thiru Arumugam was elected new President of the Society at their Annual General Meeting held earlier. Thiru replaces Harry de Sayrah JP OAM who held the position since 2010.

Dr Srilal Fernando (of the Melbourne Chapter) was re-elected as Vice-President of the CSA. The new face on the committee is that of Leslie Perera who was elected to take up duties as Secretary, the position vacated by Thiru Arumugam. Deepak Pritamdas will continue in the position of Treasurer and Public Officer. Harry de Sayrah will take over as Public Relations Officer and Sunil de Silva will look after Publications. Doug Jones will continue as Editor and Chandra Senaratne as Social Convenor. Ex-officio members are: Dr Robert Sourjah, Tony Peries, Sunimal Fernando and Srikantha Nadarajah. Hugh Karunanayake is Life Member and Upali Dharmakirti will stay on as Honorary Auditor. *(More photos on pages 32-33)*

