

The Ceylanikam



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OFFICE BEARERS

PRESIDENT

Sunil de Silva
Int. +61 2 8021 2328
sunsil@optusnet.com.au

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr Srilal Fernando

SECRETARY

Thiru Arumugam
Int. + 61 2 8850 4798
thiru.aru@gmail.com

TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER

Upali Dharmakirti

Int. + 61 2 9986 0337

3 Viola Avenue Warriewood NSW 2102

upalid@optusnet.com.au

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Ron Murrell

Int. + 61 2 9484 4070

ron.murrell@gmail.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Harry de Sayrah OAM JP

Mobile 0415 402 724

harolddes@hotmail.com

PUBLICATIONS

Mike Udabage

Int. + 61 2 9879 7728

mike_udabage@itechne.com

EDITOR/LIBRARIAN

Douglas Jones

int. + 61 9894 7449

109 Oakhill Drive Castle Hill NSW 2154

deejay20@aapt.net.au

SOCIAL CONVENOR

Chandra Senaratne

Int. + 61 2 9872 6826

charboyd@iprimus.com.au

MELBOURNE CHAPTER CONVENOR

Shelagh Goonewardene

Int. + 61 3 9808 4962

shelaghlou@yahoo.com.au

COLOMBO CHAPTER

Convenor/Local President

Chulie de Silva,

077 777 2220 e-mail: chuls201@gmail.com

Local Hon. Secretary

Daya Wickramatunge

Phone 2786783 dawick@slt.net.com

Local Hon. Treasurer

Mike Udabage

Mobile 0775 412 420 mike_udabage@itechne.com

329/124 Lake Road Dehiwela Phone 2731914

EX-OFFICIO

Dr Robert Sourjah

Int. + 61 2 96222469

robertsourjah@yahoo.com

Tony Peries

Int. + 61 2 9674 7515

srini.p@bigpond.com

Dr Tom Silva

Int. + 61 2 9344 7541

tomandnirmalie@yahoo.com

LIFE MEMBER

Hugh Karunanayake

Int. + 61 2 9980 2494

hkaru@optusnet.com.au

Sunimal Fernando

Int + 61 2 9476 6852

smfernando@optusnet.com.au

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How to become a Member of the CSA

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

In **Sydney**: Contact: Treasurer Upali Dharmakirti 3 Viola Avenue, Warriewood NSW 2102 Phone: 9986 0337

Email: upalid@optusnet.com.au

In **Melbourne**: Contact: Convenor Shelagh Goonewardene Phone: 9808 4962

Email: shelaghlou@yahoo.com.au

In **Colombo**: Contact: Local Treasurer

Mike Udabage Phone: 273 1914

(Mobile) 0775 412 420

Email: mike_udabage@itechne.com or by mail
329/124 Lake Road, Dehiwela

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Keeping Our Heritage Alive
The CEYLON SOCIETY
of Australia

(Founded in 1997)

PO Box 246 Thornleigh NSW 2120

From the Editor...

The 49th number of The Ceylankan is now in your hands. The next issue, out in May, is anxiously looked forward to. While we gird our loins preparing the production of the 50th, there are some matters that we, as members, have to address our minds to. As Upali, our Treasurer and custodian of our unflattering finances puts it: "...the CSA works on a shoe-string budget and struggles to meet ends. It is vital that all members pay their subscriptions on time."

The committee bends over backwards to cut corners in ways that will warm the cockles of old Shylock's heart. This is most evident in the case of The Ceylankan, our biggest single expense. Sadly, it boils down to one simple fact. The CSA exists on sponsor's donations and members' subscriptions. To our few generous donors, our sincere thanks. The biggest bulk of our upkeep comes from

membership fees. There lies the rub. The CSA is too acutely aware that one's life does not revolve only around the Society. Overlooking such minor obligations happens to all of us at times and is part of the busy lives we lead.

For this very reason, the CSA has put in place mechanisms to assist members to lock into a routine for meeting this annual commitment; to manage this chore painlessly. Refer to the item **Your membership ...keep it current** on the inside back cover for all the information on ways for you to stay in front, sans the hassles. So please keep those subs coming!

Including the usual features, this issue offers a variety of reading to satisfy many tastes. Anne Sutherland Fraser continues our theme of plantation life with her story of A Planter's Child. Somasiri Devendra writes admiringly of another naval officer, Commander Raja Proctor while Stefan D'Silva traces the history of civil and military aviation in Sri Lanka. Shirley W. Somanader looks at some ties that bind Sri Lanka and Australia; Tony and Srin Peries offer some travel hints when visiting Sri Lanka while Shelagh Goonewardene pays a poetic tribute to the recently deceased Henry Jayasena. And some more.

Changes

New committee member

Sunimal Fernando was educated at Royal College, Colombo and later continued his education in



England. He returned to Sri Lanka during his university gap year and worked at Geoffrey Bawa's architectural practice in Colombo and headed for England to complete the two year postgraduate component of his architectural studies.

On graduation, he first worked for the Government of the Bahamas in Nassau, on the design and construction of several civic, office and school buildings. In 1985, he came back to Sri Lanka and worked on the construction of the Katunayake International Airport buildings on site - which were completed in early 1989. He worked on the upgrade of

several Southern Province technical colleges through the period when the JVP insurrection was at its fiercest - which made travelling to these sites with government officials rather difficult. The opportunity came his way thereafter to design the Five Star 'Eden Hotel' in Beruwala, the flagship of the Confifi Hotels Group. Sunimal migrated with his wife to Australia in 1994 - prior to which he accepted an offer to work in Jakarta through 1993 as Resident Architect on the construction of the new 35-storey 700-room 'Shangri-La' Hotel there. In Sydney, Sunimal was employed in both private sector architectural consultancies as well as for local government. He worked away from Sydney for about eight months for a West Australian firm in Brunei, Malaysia and Perth. He currently works as a Senior Project Manager at the University of Western Sydney.

He is married to Chrysanthe, a past pupil of Methodist College and a graduate of Colombo University. They live in the Hornsby area and enjoy a range of activities afforded by living near to the bushland.

Our Readers Write

Leonard Woolf - another side of the man

Mr Somapala Gunadheera, the first Central school product to enter the Ceylon Civil Service, writing in the Sunday Island of September 13, 2009 states this about Leonard Woolf :“The reference to Leonard Woolf in my colleague’s contribution, reminds me of an incident my father related to me nostalgically.

Woolf had been the AGA of Hambantota when my father was a ‘Moniter’ (a trainee teacher) of less than 18 years, at Usveva. The AGA had come on horseback to Dabarella and asked the Vidane Arachchi (VA) of that place to run in front of his horse to show him the way.

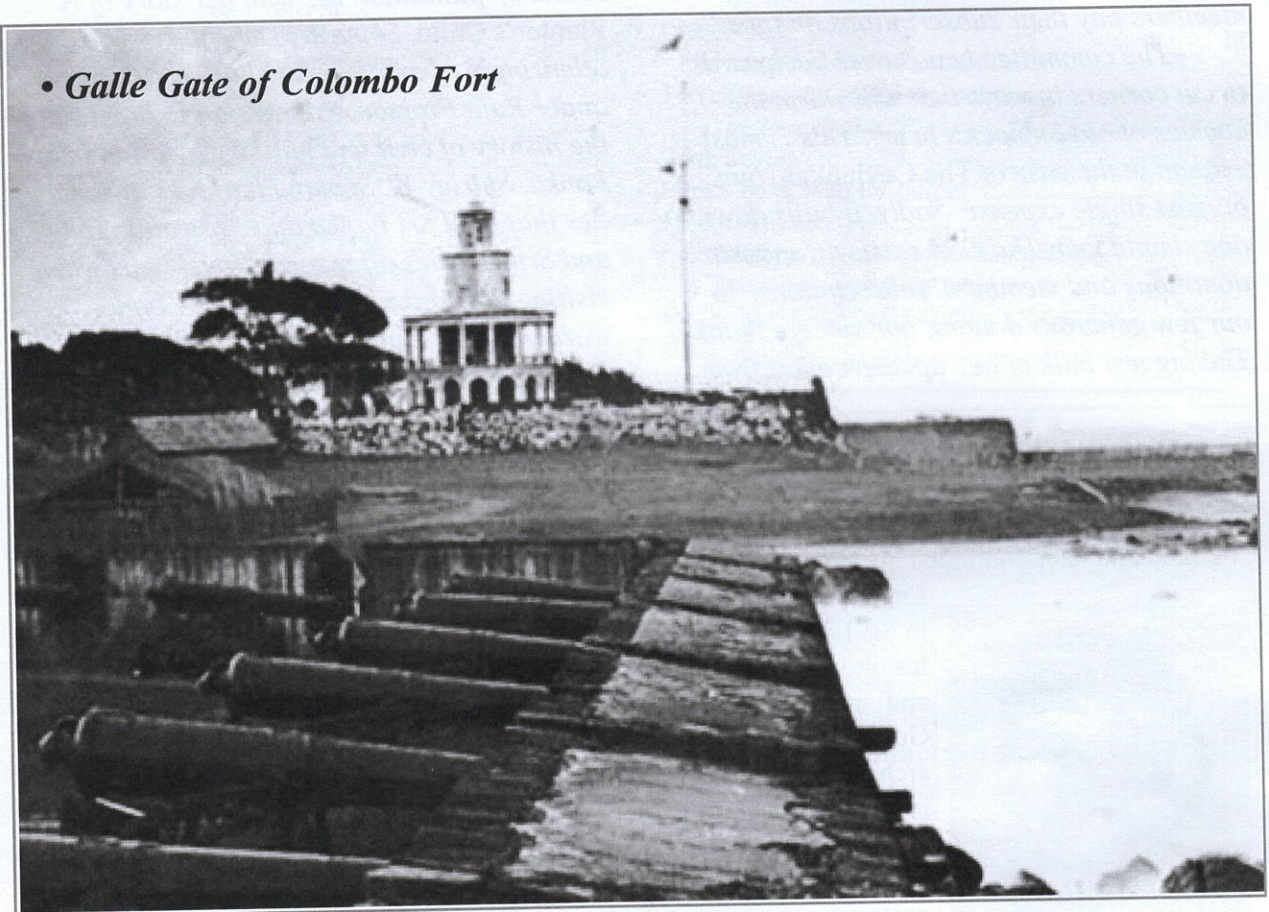
The old VA had run ahead of the horse as far as his legs could carry him and fallen down on the track through sheer exhaustion. Woolf had galloped over the fallen VA and come to the Usveva school. The headmaster of the school was down with malaria and my father being the only other teacher was taking classes. Woolf had been impressed with the budding teacher.

While the inspection was on, the VA had limped his way to the school. On seeing him the AGA had ordered him to run ahead of his horse to Angunkolapelessa but the VA had pleaded saying “Ane Hamaduruvane, I cannot run even a foot more”.

Woolf had given him the ‘standing sack’ and offered the post to my father, which the latter wisely declined”.

VAMA VAMADEVAN

• *Galle Gate of Colombo Fort*



Dear Editor,

Thank you for the two pictures of the Galle Gate of Colombo Fort [J48]. Perhaps not particularly noted by most readers are the two little items on top left. One is the Flagstaff, situated on the highest point within the Fort, which is where Naval Headquarters now stands. The street it is on is still “Flagstaff Street”. Cheek-by-jowl with it is the tip of a smaller building. That building was Colombo’s first Lighthouse which ultimately was

replaced by the Chatham Street one. I attach (above) an old photograph (forwarded to me by email long ago) which shows both the flagstaff and the lighthouse and, as a bonus, part of the armaments of the Battenburg Battery [in the foreground].

I trust you will find this “illuminating” and of interest to your readers.

SOMASIRI DEVENDRA

(Lieutenant Commander, SLN (Retd.))

A nod from the Dutch

Impressed by our sketch and story of Galle gate of the Dutch Fort of Colombo, (J48) the editors of Stichting Nederland Sri Lanka (The Dutch-Sri Lankan Foundation) reproduced it entirely in their December 2009 newsletter with due acknowledgements to our Society – Ed.

Nugegoda re-visited (1)

Dear Douglas,

As member of the CSA, Sri Lanka Chapter, I received the latest issue of 'The Ceylankan' (Nov. 2009). In it I was interested to read Roger Raymond's article 'Memories that linger – Ceylon re-visited' (page 10). My interest in that article was heightened by the fact that presently I am a resident of Nugegoda.

Recently a friend of mine lent me a book titled 'Nugegoda - Glimpses of the Past'. In it there is a chapter called 'A Touch of Holland – Raymond Road and Pietersz Place'. In it is said that Raymond (the author doesn't mention his first name) was long time resident in the area and contributed much to the community and its welfare. So as a tribute and gesture of appreciation they decided to name the road after him. There are other interesting facts about the Raymonds and Burgher families who lived in the area.

I wonder whether Roger has seen or heard about this book. There are also quite a few facts about the Melders who lived down Melder Place in Nugegoda.

In case these two families, who now live in Australia, are interested, here are the details:
First Edition 2009 Authors H.M. Mervyn P.
Herath ISBN: 978 – 955 – 573- 806 – 4 Printed and Published by: Sarasvi Publishers (Pvt) Ltd
1.3, Stanley Thilakarathna Mawatha Nugegoda, Sri Lanka
SHIRLEY SOMANADER

Nugegoda re-visited (2)

Dear Shirley,

Thank you for your email. I heard about the book on Nugegoda and ordered two. So it was with much delight that it had a chapter dealing with Raymond Road and I ordered a further five books for my family.

I wish my children who are fair dinkum Australians to know about their Burgher half. We Burghers are a dying breed, being assimilated both in Sri Lanka and Australia. In a generation or two we will cease to exist. However, our offspring continue to love their rice and curry, love cake

and brudheurs and Christmas cake so we hope these will be passed on to their children.

My great grandfather, whom the Road is named after, was Richard Francis Raymond. By all accounts he was a very good and generous man.

I am currently compiling the Raymond family tree and have Richard's business card and some photos of him. Four generations of our family carry his name in his honour, including my eldest son Matthew Richard Desmond Raymond.

I do wish to obtain information on his community efforts in and around Nugegoda. If any of your readers come across any such information I would love to hear from you.

ROGER L. RAYMOND

Putting the record straight

Dear Doug,

I refer to the article under the title "Malgolla to Mysore – Without Regrets" which appeared in *The Ceylankan* J48 of November 2009 to correct two minor errors. Firstly, my reference to Mr S. Muthiah's father Mr M. Subbiah in connection with his winning the Governor's Cup in Colombo was erroneous. In fact, Mr Subbiah won the Governor's Cup in Madras with his horse *Troutbrook*. Secondly, Mr Muthiah's weekly column in "The Hindu" newspaper is called "Madras Miscellany" (not Madras Musings) which incidentally celebrated its 10th year as a column in November last year. "Madras Musings" is a weekly journal edited by Mr Muthiah and devoted to cultural and antiquarian matters relating to Madras. Your readers may also be interested to note that Mr Muthiah, in addition to his many years as Editor of the Sunday Times and the Times Annual, was also for 13 years the author of a weekly sports column "By the corner flag" for the Sunday Times.

Yours sincerely

HUGH KARUNANAYAKE

Your views are welcome!

Do you have a point of view and would like to share it with our readers? You are welcome to express your opinion by writing to us in the Letters column. If you can shed some new light on a topic discussed in the Journal, you are tell us about it. If you like or dislike something that appears in the Journal and you have something constructive to say about it, get it out of your system. Please keep your letters brief, no more than 400 words preferably. Letters may be edited because of length and/or content.

A PLANTER'S CHILD

Angus Charles was my grandfather and I still remember him from when I was a young child. He lived out his last days with us on Maliboda Estate in the Kelani Valley (KV). He planted up Gonamatava Estate in Haputale after his early ventures in coffee, and we all know how that ended.

He was a miser of repute. My father used to tell us stories of how the watchmen on moonlight nights were not permitted kerosene for their lamps, and clerks in the office were required to use pencils to the final inch. The table salt was dried on newspaper while he sat and watched, and then would personally lock up the dry salt in the dining room dresser.

My father was also a tea planter. I was born on Waitalawa Estate, being the Postscript in the family, after a gap of some five and a half years. After a son and two daughters, I was the hoped-for second boy to be named Angus after my grandfather and I am told various baby trousseau were embroidered with an "A" in anticipation. So I was named Anne for A to match my baby pillows.

Vital third

As a third name was considered vital, my godmother and midwife, Dr Dolly Hay, picked up my mother's talcum powder and said, "Charmaine! That's a NICE name!" Hence ... Mary Anne Charmaine or MAC as my bank account would have it.

My mother, grandmother and we three girls returned from South Africa, where we had been evacuated during the War, to Maliboda Estate in the KV. It was surrounded by mountains of rain forest with rock walls and waterfalls with Adam's Peak to the south-east. My father referred to it as the Last Outpost of the Empire and it was beyond him how they had ever found it.

We were an hour from a tarred road through jungle and rubber estates. There was one particularly hazardous steep section that my father called Jacob's Ladder. Mine was a truly idyllic childhood, isolated though we were. There was a large temple tree outside the verandah which provided us children with an Adventure Playground. It was either a dolls house or an aeroplane. We also had many animal pets from a female monkey who, sadly, was chained to a long pipe that ran around through and up a large tree. My mother and our nanny made little knickers for



by
**Anne Sutherland
Fraser**

The author as a schoolgirl at
Loreto Convent in Nuwara
Eliya (circa 1950)

her for modesty's sake and prevent three daughters from learning bad habits.

My brother, at school at Lovedale in India, had a polecat. There were many dogs as my mother, then a committed and enthusiastic member of the Ceylon Kennel Club, bred and showed Scottish Terriers. My father had Beagles. (When my mother first met my father, he had 22 Beagles as his pack of hunting hounds.) And cats - I recall Tommy, a large white Persian who dribbled interminably when purring. And the birds. My father had a free-flight aviary in the garden with his collection of doves, my mother's Budgies, and the various baby birds found by the gardeners and brought to us to be released on Christmas Day.

And any baby animal found on the estate was brought to us. I recall a baby deer and a very strange and rare multi-coloured blind worm which resembled a snake, found in the paddy fields. This was let free at night on the lawn and unfortunately crawled over my mother's foot. She started screaming and fainted.

We also had our own collection of the weird and wonderful from my sister Rose's red snail eggs carefully hatched in a shoe box, to praying mantis to caterpillars. As my mother plucked these red snails off her beloved garden at night, and smashed them on the paved path. One can only imagine her reaction to being presented with a shoe box of baby snails. It all ended in tragedy when the collection escaped and found their way onto the ceiling of our night nursery. My sister's praying mantis ate my caterpillars. The uproar that ensued forbade any future collections.

There were three rivers on Maliboda and the factory was worked by a water wheel which drove the turbine. Visiting the factory was a great treat and I was nervous of those revolving crushing tables, but that divine smell of the newly manufactured tea will remain with me forever. Maliboda had some hundred acres of rubber as well as tea and the stink in the rubber factory was something we shrank from albeit fascinated by the whole process. Our nanny, Kate McShane, would

take us down to the river where there was a safe pool with a small waterfall at one end and huge boulders at the other. We had to walk down the hill through the rubber to the pool. The way down was full of leeches which my sisters loved to tease me with as I was terrified of them. And we pulled off the latex to wind into balls.

I cannot remember the time before I could swim. We had all sorts of games we played in the pool which required Being Caught if you were above the water and Catch leaping from boulder to boulder. At lunch time, we climbed up the hill again and waited on the road for the noon leaf lorry to get a lift back home.

In the evenings after Tea, the whole family, along with myriad dogs, would go for a long walk. Occasionally we met an estate labourer who would prostrate himself on the ground before my father who would shout at him in fluent Tamil, "Get Up, I'm NOT your God". He would not accept those attitudes and treated everyone on an equal level. That was during the school holidays as my sisters, Marie and Rose were by then boarders at the Good Shepherd Convent in Nuwara Eliya. I was too young, hence the doughty Kate McShane was employed as my governess to teach me what was required to go to school when my turn came.

Derring-do

One was required to "rest" in the heat of the afternoons and Kate would sit in a chair guarding the doorway to prevent my escape. When she fell asleep, I'd get away through the bathroom window scaling the stone terracing down into the garden and then to the strip of jungle which edged the vegetable garden, and chicken runs. There was a shady pool with a terrapin there. Also along the boundary, the huge pits dug for the household refuse which was a food supply for kabaragoyas.

One afternoon I'd pinched matches from the kitchen and for some forgotten reason made a bonfire which set alight the beds of sugar cane. This soon became a blazing fire and I ran. A kabaragoya chose the same path to escape and I believed it was after me. My screams awakened the household and servants erupted from their quarters with pruning knives. The first person I met was Kate who grabbed me by the back of my dress and delivered "a tight slap" and told me this was God's punishment for being disobedient.

Unfortunately, my father thought the whole episode quite hilarious. Kate and I were at dagger's drawn and I persevered in finding ways to annoy her. Putting frogs in her shoes or wetting

my bed. Then I went to the Convent too, with Kate and my own mattress.

For some reason, my mother insisted all her daughters had their own kapok mattresses. The reason for Kate to accompany me was because I could not dress by myself and besides, had never worn a Liberty vest before, and they had buttons up the front. Kate owned a Mynah called Billy Boy. My father often repeated the story of how she shocked the nuns by warning them not to stand too close as he ate fruit "and sometimes shitted". Mother John was my first teacher. I still recall the Quisnart rods for arithmetic and our first lessons in French and Latin. I loved it. Boarding school provided companionship and fun and being with my sisters.



• The author (left) with elder sister Rosemarie (centre) - later Mrs Roger Somerville - and mother Gladys Sutherland Fraser. (circa 1950)

At the start of the holidays, we were 'bussed' down to Nanu-Oya station where a train with reserved carriages for the school would eventually steam in to our enormous excitement. All our trunks, carefully labeled, were loaded in the luggage van at the rear and hampers with our picnic lunches portered in up the steps into the carriages. Planter's daughters were met by parents at various stops along the way. I cannot now recall the name of the station where we got out but it was then down the Giniganetha Pass to a rest house [Kitulgala] where the movie *Bridge on the River Kwai* was filmed. "Thunderbox" lavatories with an adjacent box of sawdust with a huge scoop and my mother would carefully lay down a complete cover of lavatory paper on the seat. We had competitions for who could get sick the most. My sister, Rose, won, finally throwing up in the anthurium plant at the front steps of the bungalow.

Our Christmas parties at Taldia Club near Avissawella were a major event in our year. We three sisters all had special dresses made by the women at Kotahena Convent. I still recall one of organdie with attached butterflies and how scratchy it was. We three sisters, growing up in isolation stuck together and my mother in later years used to repeat how a friend described us as

(Continued on page 8)

“three ducks in a row”. Father Christmas arrived on an elephant with his sacks of toys.

Eventually, my eldest sister Marie and brother Roy went to school in England. So I was left with only one sister Rose, to annoy.

In later years, when my sisters were old enough to attend Rugged match dances, I would watch as they put on their long frocks in our room at the Avissawella rest house, and my mother would dab blue shadow on their lids with her little finger and then wipe most of it off again. I learnt early, only Tarts wore eye shadow that was visible. I was permitted to stay for the dance for a short time and we would sit out on the verandah in cane chairs with glasses of Lanka Lime.

These were the days of the Punka Wallahs – for the uninitiated, the punka was a hanging piece of fabric attached to a wooden beam on the ceiling of the dance floor. With the aid of pulleys, it would be pulled back and forth to provide a gentle breeze. A man would sit out on the verandah, pulling the rope. He was known as the “Punka Wallah”. There was a row of three along the ceiling that time. Eventually punkas were replaced by electric fans and real bands playing Victor Sylvester tunes took over from dance music provided from gramophone records.

I still recall my mother who loved to dance going round and round on the dance floor with her favourite dance partner, “someone” Van Langenburg. My father never danced. He preferred the bar with chat and laughter.

My brother played rugger for the KV. We would sit in the grandstand and watch the matches. It had been a horse race ground previously, we learnt. This was after my brother had left his school in England and became a creeper with my father on Neuchatal Estate in Kalutara intending to become a planter too. He disliked it, eventually leaving for Australia in the early 50s where he resides to this day.

During Pongal or Thivali, we always went up to Kutchaveli on the coast north of Trincomalee. All the ferries and the sight and smell of the sea made it an exciting time. My father always reminding us: “Can you smell the sea?” was great. He would sit on a rock chatting contently to a fisherman as they both fished and the rest house with kerosene lamps and all the insects flying around them – and the crab curries. It was memorable.

In due course, Rose and I were sent to Loreto Convent, Claremont near Perth in Western Australia; highly recommended by a nun at the Nuwara Eliya convent. Rose went ahead. After a

further few months running wild on the estate, now with a pet goat, I accompanied my parents on leave and joined the school as a day girl to become accustomed to it before their return. Our uniform required grey stockings held up with a suspender belt. This for a planter’s child used to running away screaming from kabaragoyas. Loreto was truly a wonderful school.

But I had grown up too wild and in two years, fell out of trees in an out-of-bounds area and broke an arm each time. What is Out of Bounds? When Rose matriculated and returned to Ceylon, it seems my mother was told I was too much of a responsibility to be there on my own. So I was packed off back to the convent in Nuwara Eliya again and shortly afterwards to my favourite school of all in England with dire warnings ringing in my ears. This was a Roman Catholic Public School full of diplomat’s daughters and various titled young from Europe. It was highly academic and I met my match and was never bored or bad. It was intended to turn me into a young lady. Only my friends and family can tell you if they succeeded.

During our first summer/Christmas holiday home from Loreto, my eldest sister Marie married Ken Peddie and I was her bridesmaid. I howled my eyes out at the news as now she was leaving us and home.

When I was schooling in England, my sister Rose met and married Roger Somerville, then a young *Peria Dorai* (big boss) on Wewesse Estate in Badulla. When my time came, I married Ian Ritchie, then a *Sinna Dorai* (small boss or assistant to *Peria Dorai*) on Attampettia Estate in Hali-Ela and after that to Dambatenne Estate in Haputale with Liptons. And a whole new era of our lives started as planter’s wives who then produced another generation of planters’ children who retain the same memories of growing up on tea plantations. They were at school in Colombo at the International School. Five cousins there together. It was all different but somehow the same. School holidays were now at Sea Anglers Club in Trincomalee. My parents then retired to 12 acres of coconuts in Nilaveli.

Thankfully long sold up and returned to England, they were dead and buried, before the Tsunami hit that coast. My memory of holidays spent with parents in Nilaveli are of white sand bordered with coconuts on the one side with the sea on the other stretching to the horizon with not another soul in sight.

None of us has ever returned. Our memories of those Golden Years are sacrosanct.

Hand in hand with Charles Dickens

by
Ransiri Menike Silva

The unceasing harassment from my family and close friends dragged on for almost three decades until, in sheer desperation, I finally published my first book as a grandmother of 70 years.

Intoxicated by my achievement, I took over the task of distribution (which I knew nothing about) from my publisher friend who almost fell at my feet in gratitude and vanished before I could change my mind.

That is how I found myself setting out on an adventure into virtually unknown territory... the real world of Charles Dickens. The genes of journalism continually running through my veins ensured I had an educating and thoroughly exhilarating experience. The seven decades that stretched far behind me in no way dampened my enthusiasm as I set sail on yet another voyage of discovery.

To leave the task of distribution to one's publisher is the easy way out. All he does is load the stocks, documents and 'catcher' into the van and sends it off on the usual rounds; an utterly humdrum affair if ever there was one. I dared to be different. Armed with the relevant contact numbers provided by my enthusiastic friends and relatives, I was soon 'putt-putting' around the City and its suburbs in trishaws packed with my goods.

A revelation

My initiation into the business was a revelation. Entering a dazzling popular bookshop, I resisted the urge to linger at the magnetising array of bookcracks and walked briskly up to the reception desk with my merchandise. Naively I expected to dispose of my goods there and get back to the bookstands that beckoned invitingly. Instead, I was directed with the wave of a hand to a hidden entrance where I was confronted by a steep narrow stairway with no handrails that led upwards, not to Heaven, but a dim window at attic level.

The confining walls on either side were decorated with murals of damp green/blue fungi and the stale mouldy air almost stifled me. However, I consoled myself with the thought that this was Penicillin in its purest form and a natural

armour against all forms of bacteria lurking on the pavement outside.

At the different floor levels where minute landings were, I paused to get my breath back before tacking the next stage of the climb. Having finally reached the top, panting like a racehorse after winning a race, I found myself in the Purchase Department, also known as the Stores.

Here desks piled high with new books, periodicals, computers and other literary garnish

placed haphazardly around appeared to be the accepted decor. Engrossed workers at their seats looked up curiously at me shortly before turning back to their work. Having been directed to the relevant desk on inquiry, I had to manoeuvre myself carefully round the stacks of books tottering precariously on the floor and on every available table, chair and stool to reach my destination.

I had taken my first step on the bedazzling road to "Distribution!"

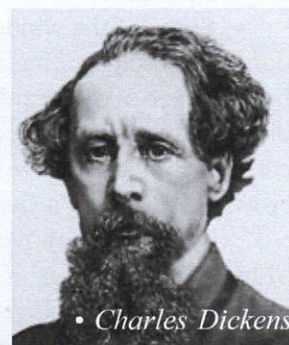
This was the scene I was to become familiarised with at every outlet during the next few weeks. Some of the staircases were straightforward climbs, while others involved negotiating sharp turns as I conquered from two to even four floors to reach the peak. Stacks of books, overflowing files, discarded computers and other damaged machinery narrowed the steps further, but offered no hand support as they were already in danger of collapsing at the slightest tremor.

The walls invariably carried mosaic work of multi-coloured fungi whose dank odour, while impeding my normal breathing process also vaccinated me permanently against all forms of bacteria.

The enticing windows at the top, I discovered, were permanently sealed. Perhaps as a precaution against employees throwing themselves off in desperation. While providing sufficient light to guide the traveller, the misted glass also yielded an uninterrupted view of another world down below that existed behind the glittering facade of enticing shop windows that lined the main highway.

The vivid life of shanty townships bristling with activity was brought sharply into focus.

(Continued on page 10)



• Charles Dickens

Women, pre-schoolers, loafers and faithful pets shouted, laughed, fought (muffled by the window pane) washed clothes, pans, plates and themselves with abandon and generally appeared to be enjoying life to the full in spite of all the hardship they suffered.

Some of the windows looked out on garbage dumps... not the rotting smelly kind, but piles of broken masonry, discarded building material, disintegrating packing cases and flattened cardboard boxes, where canines, cats, cattle and crows were having a field day.

The skyline above was dotted with an array of high-rise buildings of varied shapes, sizes and architecture (some horrendous) ... frozen, sterile, still life so completely in contrast to the animated vibrancy below.

As the spirit of Charles Dickens took me by the hand and guided me upwards, I expected to stumble upon the characters he has created stooping over desks with quill pens and inkpots...

As the spirit of Charles Dickens took me by the hand and guided me upwards, I expected to stumble upon the characters he has created stooping over desks with quill pens and inkpots, and I was not disappointed. For, as I stepped into the rooms, the scenes that were on display assured me that those Dickensian ghosts had not been laid to rest but were still actively haunting today's land of the scribes.

The air here was stagnant and laden with dust. Tilting fluorescent tubes lit up tottering piles of books and files on the floor leaning on the walls for support. Cupboards and racks balancing heavy ledgers and bundles of loose papers lined the rest of the space. The only concession to modernity here were the groups of young people operating the computers... an utterly incongruous eyesore in those quaint surroundings.

My uphill task was only one side of the coin I discovered. The other took me down deep into the pit of the earth, the basement, where the identical atmosphere prevailed and the musty, dusty air had to be experienced to be believed.

Fluorescent lights hung in rows, dispensing light to the cubicles while rows of rotating fans desultorily chased clouds of mustiness from one corner to another... for here, down below, there are no windows.

Faded pomposity

Occasionally, an air of faded pomposity was encountered in the form of dust-laden carpet runners. They were of indeterminate hue, the original colour being smothered under a solidly caked layer of accumulated dust.

Some establishments had their stores elsewhere, a respectable distance away. Yet there too, the identical decor and atmosphere prevailed. However, the rim of the coin glistened invitingly as I discovered bright young buyers in brighter surroundings that required no mountaineering skills... and surprisingly, a security guard at a well known establishment who fervently declared "Madam, your name is famous!"

But those refreshing surroundings and the slick efficiency could not impress me. I found them uninteresting and uninspiring. They can never capture the *Ye Olde Book Shoppe* feel of the Dickensian era that is the backbone of any proper bookshop.

I am truly grateful to have been privileged to experience a behind-the-scenes slice of literary life so important to a writer. I took my ride on a celestial bus as a septuagenarian and consider all those who have not done so as having truly missed the bus.

I did all this three years ago and now I am doing it all over again with my second book ... and thoroughly enjoying the repeat performance!

**The Ceylankan's
50th issue in May 2010**

It is but fitting that we pay suitable tribute to our esteemed Journal in keeping with this important milestone. While the Editorial team will, within reason, tailor an appropriate birthday attire for the occasion, I invite all readers of the journal to reminisce a little - send us your brief tributes in 400 words or less - you may go into raptures and make it an entire article if your wish. Has the journal been a moving experience for you? Has it represented the objectives of our society? Met with your expectations? How has it held your interest all these years? Here's a great opportunity for you to give words to your thoughts. We will happily consider everything you submit for publication. Please note that the deadline for the May issue is April 10, 2010. So please give it your best shot.

Here's to a facile pen or quill!

A Tribute to Henry Jayasena

May your body lying now in stillness
Rest from all its labours and distress
Having accomplished so much and
Even long overcoming a dire enemy in cancer.
May those who honour you be full of praise and blessing
For the treasures of your talents they now inherit.
May your mind and spirit be free
Light as a gentle breeze moves with ease
To take wings into the far spaces of another plane,
Leaving no regrets for you have fulfilled
Everything that you were meant to accomplish.
May your grieving family wipe away their tears
Cherishing all the memories of you and
Drawing inspiration from your example
And all else given them out of love.
May your works, the plays, the films, the books
Be valued and pass down from generation to generation.
May you never be forgotten by a grateful nation.
May those who knew your generosity and compassion
Remember to be likewise to others
For you explained, advised, comforted, consoled
In times of their gravest need.
May your journey to *nirvana* be swift and joyful
As we wish you, with full hearts, God speed.

Shelagh Goonewardene

Wanted: your literary contributions

We are always on the look-out for suitable articles for publication in The Ceylankan. Articles must be original (preferably previously unpublished) and of an anecdotal, historical nature relating to Sri Lanka's post-medieval periods. They must contribute to the ideals of the CSA being non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial. Articles of 1500 to 2000 words in length are preferred although longer articles will be considered with a view to publication.

Wherever possible, contributors are requested to annotate bibliographical references to enable further research and study by interested members and readers. Forward all submissions to the editor.

DISCLAIMER: While every effort is made to publish material that is relevant and accurate, we cannot take responsibility for errors and inaccuracies. The editor appreciates if any discrepancies are brought to his attention.

Speakers for our Public Meetings

The Society is always on the lookout for people to give talks at our meetings open to members and the public. Prospective speakers can be academics and others who are specialised and well-researched in their chosen topics. There are members who may easily fit into this category and there maybe non-members who are your friends or relatives living in or visiting Australia or Sri Lanka from overseas whom you can nominate/invite to speak at our meetings. Meetings are scheduled for April/May, September/October, November/December. Dates and times can be arranged to suit availability and convenience of the speakers. Please contact:
Sydney – Sunil de Silva (President) on (02) 8021 2328 or Email: sunsil@optusnet.com.au
Melbourne - Srilal Fernando (Vice-President) on (03) 9809 1004 or Email: srilalf@bigpond.net.au
Colombo - Chulie de Silva (Local President) Tel: 077 777 2220; Email: chuls201@gmail.com

From a grassy airfield in 1934 to the home of the first National Aviation Museum in 2009, Ratmalana Airport provides a starting point in the early years of civil and military aviation of Sri Lanka states STEFAN D'SILVA as he traces ...

...The beginnings Sri Lanka's aviation industry

Ratmalana Airport; the original international airport of Sri Lanka, was inaugurated in November 1935 as an airfield when a 3-seater de Havilland Puss Moth piloted by Mr. Tyndale-Biscoe with passengers Mr. W.B. Schleiter and a Ceylonese named Mr. C. B. Darius from the Madras Flying Club, landed on its grass strip. Over the next few years, the aerodrome was in limited use by amateur aviators of The Aero Club of Ceylon. In February 1938, a weekly airmail service for the Empire Airmail Scheme was established, carrying mail to India; the mail was mainly destined for Great Britain. The seeds of international aviation had been planted in Ceylon. There were no radio communications or radar technology at that time.

The quiet leisurely pace of the Ratmalana airfield changed in April 1942 when the Ratmalana Airport played a key role in the Royal Air Force's repulsion of the Japanese air attack on Ceylon. Keeping control of the strategically important geopolitical location of Ceylon in the Indian Ocean was vital to the British war effort. In March 1942, on a tip off, Britain's 30 Squadron and others made Ratmalana aerodrome their base with a fleet of 20 Hawker Hurricane aircraft. With the absence of proper radar, a series of spotters placed around the island informed Operational Headquarters on the movement of aircraft. But the problem was that they did not work on Sundays and that was the day, Easter Sunday, April 5, 1942, when Japan chose to launch their air attack on Ceylon. Ratmalana aerodrome was undoubtedly a primary target. Any person still alive today (like my parents), recall the 'dog fights', the 'black outs', and 'home bomb shelters' of those days. Ratmalana airfield served the Royal Air Force well that day in contributing to the alteration of the course of WW2 in the Far East and was firmly established as a functioning, valuable airfield.

A water runway

With the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942, Ceylon's geopolitical importance to the war effort came to the rescue once again in providing a refuelling/stopover point for the longest non-stop international flight between Australia (Swan River, Perth) and India (Karachi). Qantas Empire

Airways was in dire need to maintain its international connection with the East and Europe. The versatile natural resource of Koggala Lake, just south of Galle, provided the British and Australia with a 'water runway' for PBY Catalina Flying boats to maintain those long-haul international links. Two hundred and seventy-one crossings were made between 1943 and 1945, carrying 648 passengers on dangerous flights



through Japan-ese patrolled skies. Interestingly, a body of water played an important role in the history of international aviation. Those flights are well known as the 'Secret Order of the Double Sunrise' because the passengers saw two sunrises on the 28 to 32-hour flight.

National symbols of a new nation

With the end of World War Two in 1945, the stage was set for an Independent Ceylon. Two important symbols of that independence were to be the country's own air force, The Royal Ceylon Airforce (RCyAF), and a national commercial airline, Air Ceylon. Years later H.E. President Chandrika Bandaranaike-Kumaratunga encapsulated the importance by stating, "A national airline is a powerful symbol of any country. That airline represents the country all over the world and comes to stand for all that is good, or bad, about its home".

While the legislative and political framework was being negotiated for an independent Ceylon in the immediate post-war years, aviation in general was having some of its own historical moments. The Department of Civil Aviation (under the British Ministry of Transport) was formed in 1946. On November 13, 1946, J.P. Obeyesekere, a Cambridge graduate, did the Ceylonese proud as he piloted his Auster airplane

into Ratmalana Airport after a month-long journey from Britain. Obeyesekere was accompanied by an Englishman named Farquharson flying an identical Auster in very close formation – almost within touching distance! – the latter aircraft landing a few minutes after Obeyesekere at Ratmalana, where crowds had thronged to welcome the flyers.



• *Auster Autocrat plane piloted by J.P. Obeyesekere...now in the museum.*

In early 1947, the Department of Civil Aviation acquired three Douglas DC-3 Dakota aircraft from India. All three aircraft were based at Ratmalana Airfield. They were named *Viharamaha Devi*, *Sita Devi*, and *Sunethra Devi*. These aircraft heralded the birth of Air Ceylon. A ‘feather in the cap’ of international aviation for Ceylon was added in June 1947 when the *Viharamaha Devi* was flown to London and back over a nine-day trip to collect the electoral registers for the up and coming election.

Meanwhile, another of the DC-3 aircraft was used by Prime Minister D. S. Senanayake and his cabinet ministers to visit India on official business. These journeys were an indication that Ceylon was capable of connecting with the rest of the world via international aviation. Furthermore, the natural disaster floods of August 1947 saw all three Dakota aircraft from Air Ceylon provide yeoman service to disaster relief during that national disaster. It is generally believed that Air Ceylon’s performance in that disaster proved to the Government of the day that they were capable of progressing into a fully-fledged international, commercial airline.

To the jubilation of many, Air Ceylon’s first international, passenger flight departed Ratmalana Airport for Madras via Kankesanthurai on the December 10, 1947. The return flight later that day, at Ratmalana, marked the first passenger arrival flight. The three DC-3s were a proud display at the Independence Day ceremonies on February 4, 1948 as they conducted a fly past in formation – a symbol of a new nation.

A more adventurous or bold attempt for Air Ceylon to make its mark in the world of international aviation was the first flight to Sydney, Australia. *Sunethra Devi* departed Ratmalana Airport on May 30, 1948 and landed in Sydney on June 5, 1948. The flight is historic not only for landing in Sydney, but also for being the first all-Asian crew to land an aircraft in Australia. However, as aviation historian and editor Roger Thiedeman wrote in 1999, the flight nearly created “*history for the wrong reasons*” when they had a very narrow escape in bad weather over Singapore, en route to Australia (see recommended reading notes below for details on that article). This could be labelled the first long haul-flight of Air Ceylon, though not for commercial purposes, as the purpose of the flight was to ferry Ceylon navy personnel to Australia to take possession of a fishing trawler the Ceylonese government had purchased, and to sail that vessel back to Ceylon.



• *The original Douglas DC-3 Dakota purchased for Air Ceylon.*

As for the Royal Ceylon Air Force; the legislation to establish a national air force was ratified in October 1949 resulting in the Royal Ceylon Air Force (RCyAF) coming into operation in March 1951. Katunayake Airport, built in the 1940s by the British for the Royal Air Force was the obvious choice as the major RCyAF base. ‘RAF Negombo’, which was the name for the RAF base at Katunayake, was handed over to the RCyAF in 1957. All other RAF bases/airfields were handed over in 1957. Ratmalana Airport continued to provide some service to the RCyAF although Katunayake was the major operational base.

Ratmalana Airport continued to serve Air Ceylon for many a year in those early days. However, a new international airport was required to cope with the expansion of international aviation in Ceylon. Thus in 1964, with Canadian aid, expansion work commenced at Katunayake to

(Continued on page 14)

accommodate more civilian aircraft and replace Ratmalana Airport as the primary International Airport of Ceylon; until then Katunayake had seen only limited use for commercial flights, mainly by BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation). The airport was completed in 1967. Air Ceylon had found a new 'home' for international flights. The Katunayake International Airport was named the Bandaranaike International Airport (BIA), after Prime Minister Srimavo Bandaranaike in 1970; the name reverted to Katunayake International Airport in 1977 and



• Fetching saree-clad Air Ceylon hostesses.

changed back to Bandaranaike International Airport in 1995. Amongst the first aircraft to be used by Air Ceylon from then new terminal at Katunayake were a Hawker Siddeley Trident and a VC10 on lease from BOAC. Meanwhile, Air Ceylon continued to grow and acquire various aircraft to meet their expanding role in international aviation.

Spectre of terrorism

Ratmalana Airport was not untouched by the spectre of terrorism either; on September 7, 1978, an LTTE bomb ripped through an Air Ceylon Avro 748 sitting on the tarmac at Ratmalana. Thankfully no was killed. However, it is claimed that this incident was a significant point in the ailing profitability of Air Ceylon as a commercial entity. In many ways 1978 was the year that saw the end of the commercial viability of Air Ceylon, and because of a Presidential Commission report, it was shut down.

Nevertheless, the national carrier was relaunched by the J. R. Jayewardene Government in September 1979 when Air Lanka was born. The commitment by the Government to maintain a national carrier as a symbol of the Nation prevailed.

Air Lanka also ran into some management difficulties and in 1995, President Chandrika Kumaratunga took action to "save" Air Lanka from folding and to stabilise the ailing airline. Part privatisation was an attractive option. Emirates and Virgin emerged as the two front-runners and future partners. Finally after a few years of negotiation the new name 'SriLankan

Airlines' was launched with the arrival of an Airbus A340 touching down at Katunayake, complete with new logo and colours. Emirates emerged as the major partner in the new national carrier. Equally noteworthy is the appointment of the first Sri Lankan Airlines female Captain Anusha Siriratne, in August 2008.

Irrespective of the shrill media cries in relation to management of the National carrier of Sri Lanka, the commitment by successive Governments must be applauded in maintaining a powerful symbol of an independent nation. Bad management, terrorist attacks on Katunayake Airport Terminal, the destruction of aircraft, and the huge loss of assets, a world financial crisis and intense politics have yet to stop the *Monara* flying high around the world.

Recommended reading:

Monara Rising – The history of Civil Aviation in Sri Lanka by Media Prima Dubai (available from Vijitha Yapa Bookstores in Sri Lanka)

<http://www.airforce.lk>

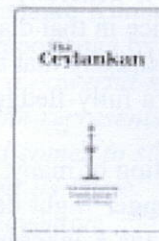
[pages.php?pages=air_force_museum_history](http://www.airforce.lk/pages.php?pages=air_force_museum_history)

http://www.raf.mod.uk/history_old/ceylon2.html

<http://sundaytimes.lk/991212/plus6.html> (The Story of Sunethra Devi-a brush with death over Singapore by Roger Thiedeman.

(My special thanks to Roger Thiedeman, aviation historian, for his invaluable help and checking of facts in the article).

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A grateful **SOMASIRI DEVENDRA** says, admiringly,

“Thank you, Commander Proctor”

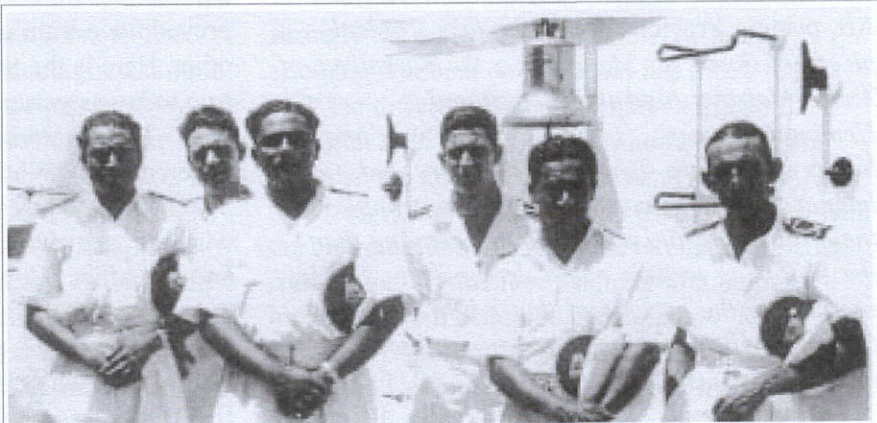
I met Raja Proctor only once: a meeting that lives in memory.

In 1960 my naval career was beginning and Commander Raja Proctor's was ending. With a degree from London he joined Ceylon Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1942, and became a competent officer and saw active service off Colombo, Trincomalee, Addu Atoll and Diego Garcia. Then, when the Burma Front was opened, he had sailed a little Motor Fishing Vessel across the Bay of Bengal to Akyab for logistical runs up-river to the frontline. With the end of war and the dawn of Independence, Proctor was absorbed into the Royal Ceylon Navy, underwent advanced training in Gunnery School in the U.K. and

continued to serve at sea. His last, fateful command was H.M.Cy.S Mahasena which, along with the minesweeper H.M.Cy S. Parakrama, had sailed on a “show the flag” cruise to Hong Kong and Japan. But Murphy's Law prevailed and things went wrong. When that happens, a Captain has to take the rap, and Proctor was out in the cold.

Now under suspension pending a Commission of Inquiry, Proctor was killing time at our Training camp in Diyatalawa when I met him. That day, Naval Headquarters had warned us of industrial unrest in the country. We were not to go to Badulla for the sailors' fortnightly pay but report to Colombo for the money. The Commanding Officer (C.O.) sent for me and detailed me for this task. “Aye, aye, Sir” I saluted, too wet behind the ears to understand – let alone appreciate – how inexperienced I was for the task. Chatting with the C.O. across his desk was Proctor, in civvies. He now turned in his chair towards me. “Schooley...” he said – for that was what Instructor Officers were, in naval parlance – “Schooley, I don't think you know what you are taking on. Listen to me, carefully. You are going with an armed party on a long journey when there is unrest in the country. I cannot teach you everything, now, but keep you wits about you.

Think ahead - what would you do if your men need to stop and stretch their legs? Don't stop where there are people. Stop only where there are



• *HMCyS VIJAYA's first officers (circa 1949) and the members of the group from left: Lt.E.Sanmugaratnam, Lt. Victor Hunter, Lt.Cdr. Rajan Kadirgammam (CO), Lt. Alanson Caldera, Lt. Rajah Proctor, Sub Lt. Eddie White. The only one alive of this group is Lt. Alanson Caldera, who is in Australia.*

no houses and you can see the road before and behind you. Then...” And so on.

This man, awaiting the axe to fall (as it did) on his own career, yet felt compelled to advise a neophyte. I never met him again, but I was there at his funeral many years later.

I - in the Navy to teach English to officer cadets - had heard that Proctor had recently published a book: “**A Child Must Cry and other tales: A collection of short stories of Ceylon and India**”. He had started writing them while supervising a refit of H.M.Cy.S.Vijaya in Grimsby in 1952. The book carried a Foreword by the Australian Writers' Professional Service, Melbourne, beginning with: “*These stories have deeply impressed us.*” Now I searched for it, found it, read it and lost it! But, a few years ago Nazreen Sansoni showed me a copy she had found in a second-hand bookshop. “Read it and tell me what you make of it,” she said. I photocopied it, returned Nazreen's copy and lent mine to an old salt. But he “crossed the bar” (navy speak for passing on) and I had not the heart to search for it among his “effects”. Nazreen, too, had lent her copy to someone she had lost track of.

Finally, Anandalal Nanayakkara, a speaker at the Colombo Chapter of the CSA, and a

(Continued on page 16)

collector of books, found me a copy. I set about reading it in earnest. And so began the rediscovery of a man.

I was totally unprepared for understanding of, and empathy for the impoverished folk, rural and urban, of South India and Ceylon, and of the lives of the fishermen of both sides of the Palk Strait. I will not try to evaluate them: Mulk Raj Anand, then the doyen of Indian Literature and Art, placing Proctor above "*the fake tropical pieces of Somerset Maugham....the narratives of Andre Malraux (and the) occasional Hemingway*" says: "... he knows the way into the hearts of obscure fishermen, villagers and lumpens whose romantic struggle to grapple with their simple destinies is far more genuine than the European writers could demonstrate.... (He) reproduces the accents of the Indian Ocean....with a tempestuous warmth that is unselfconsciously passionate..."

Neither will I speak of his totally fictional pieces, written light-heartedly, which do not speak to me of Raja Proctor, the man.

To me, he was so very much a man of his time. It dawned on me that he and I had both lived through the later 1940s – he, as a naval officer and I, as an adolescent schoolboy. That was when the British Raj was breaking up and the countries that had been "British India" – India, Pakistan and Ceylon – were viscerally united against their erstwhile master. In Ceylon, then, horse racing was a major sport; we had "Viennese Specialists" in our hospitals; Dakotas were the workhorses of the air; smuggling and illicit immigration to and from an impoverished southern India to the economic 'paradise' of Ceylon was the Navy's chief worry. So all I will do is to comment only on the stories that talk of those times: *A Child must Cry, The Doctors, Race Horsing, My Story, Does Anyone know Why?* and "*Vande Matharam*".

In *A Child Must Cry* Proctor is the actor-narrator. A naval officer on anti-illicit immigration patrol plucks out a boy from a wrecked boat in stormy seas. The Royal Ceylon Navy's main operational role then was of patrolling the northern seas – a role largely forgotten today. Just as it is today, people smuggling was common: except that, then, the smuggling was from India to Ceylon. A fisherman moonlighting as smuggler finds that a passenger is his own small son. A storm blows up, the boat capsizes and a naval patrol picks up the little boy. That is the scene, but the theme is of father-son relationships. The love between the rescued boy and his missing father is reflected in the officer's mind as he thinks of his

own son. The two stories twine and the officer finds both children becoming one. "*I slanted the mug against his lips and said, 'Son, it'll give you strength, drink'. His thin, cold-blued lips moved apart. His adam's apple jerked as he swallowed, its fire opened his eyes wide. They were round and shiny, soft as moonlight...*" But beyond the story-teller's art is the hard truth of the poverty that made people smuggling inevitable; smugglers preyed upon immigrants but both needed each other. Here is the tragic kernel of this story – as true today as yesterday.

The Doctors explores a tragedy of a different kind. Who remembers the "Viennese Specialists"? They were Austrian Jewish doctors who had, somehow, survived the Nazi domination and the Allies felt obliged to rehabilitate them - in the colonies. There were some very good doctors among them and I, personally, remember a Neurologist who cured a close friend of epileptic fits. But our own medical men sniggered that they were not really 'Specialists', and even qualified doctors. This story is of such an 'unqualified doctor', and is told in his own words – in a series of flashbacks into the days when he was on the run – at a disciplinary inquiry by his Ceylonese colleagues. Yes, he says, he was only a final-year medical student, whose studies were cut short by the war, lived in the shadows as a "*Medicine man*" forever on the run till: "*Who conferred you the right to practice? What country? ... 'France! A Prefect of Police'*". And so he becomes "*Doctor Von Ludwig Berchenstein. COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: Vienna, Austria. DISPLACED PERSON.*" A very well told story, it leads you to sympathise with this non-doctor who is a better doctor than the qualified ones, his accusers. And you think of our own Internally Displaced Persons.

I include *Race Horsing* – a light tale – for the same reason as *The Doctors* because it is about a hardly remembered facet of 20th century Ceylon. It is about a "Turf Accountant" forced to flee his creditors in England, who breaks journey in Colombo *en route* to Australia. Here, he meets characters from the horseracing underworld who specialise in doping horses. It was, indeed, a big business in Colombo, then, much to the embarrassment of the venerable Colombo Turf Club (CTC). Finally, the CTC turned to a member, a Science Master in a leading school to carry out tests on the horses before each race in an effort to curb the practice! I should know, as I have watched him at work – for he was my father-in-law!

My Story is very different. The narrative is set in Gunnery school in England (where Proctor was trained?). A class of Marines and Commonwealth naval officers is gathered for a lecture on "Aid to Civil Power", emphasising the principle of 'minimum force'. The lecturer warns the mixed group that some of his examples would involve Commonwealth countries, but only the Pakistani officer asks that, if a story involves his country, he should be allowed to give his own version. The lesson proceeds and comes to that classic example of excessive force: the "Amritsar Massacre" by the British in 1919. After the lecturer's clinical analysis, the Pakistani officer asks for his turn. His story is emotionally-charged: of a man who gives his revolver to his wife to teach his little son to shoot, and then marches to his death. In 1939 the son, now a man, confronts Lieut. Gen. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the man who gave the infamous 'crawling order', and shoots him in public in England. The officer, shaken by emotion, says "that man was my father" who, at his execution said, "My mission is over". "But...but...aren't you a Pakistani?" 'Yes' Mohamed Azad replied softly, a catch in his voice, 'I am a Pakistani now; I was an Indian for twenty-two years. My family were Indians.' " The story is presented in fiction form but the events are true and it shows the ambivalent feelings towards the British that linked the peoples who had been part of the Raj: I, myself – like many other Ceylonese – shared this anti-British feeling, while supporting the war. Today, when the West is "holier-than-thou", this story is required reading.

Does Anyone Know Why? is about another of the Navy's tasks after the war – flood relief work. I remember the great flood of 1947 when our own garden was 'islanded' and we gave refuge to the less fortunate. The story is of a group of sailors arriving with a rowboat – probably a whaler, as this was long before fiberglass dinghies and outboard motors – in tow. The water is rising and villagers are taking refuge in the highest areas, the road and the railroad which stood much higher than the paddy fields, as I well remember. Contemptuous remarks greet them: "What's this? A row boat? A boat on dry land? We need floats and catamarans! Not row boats! Huh! Land sailors". But the water keeps rising and the strong current soon makes the smaller craft ineffective. The roomy rowboat now comes into its own. Picking up people marooned on rooftops becomes the real task and the boat patrols the waters searching for them. The theme, though, is not about rescue, but the greed of people and how

even those in need prey upon each other. The arrogant merchant in his multi-storied house, the money-lender unwilling to leave his wealth, the robbers on small craft stealing whatever they can. The scene and the atmosphere are genuine and this is really a period piece. To me, the memory of what must have been this self-same flood, lends it a particular poignancy.

And so we come to "*Vande Matharam*": fittingly the last story. The title is of India's alternate National Anthem and has much to do with the different strands of India's freedom struggle, seen in this story. "*Vande Matharam*" was also the anthem of the Indian National Army of Subhas Chandra Bose, who tried to link up with the Germans and the Japanese to oust the British from India. I remember listening to it being broadcast from occupied Singapore – "Radio Shionan" – calling "our brothers and sisters in India and Ceylon". This story is set in India and the focal point is a ceremonial naval funeral of a village schoolboy who had run away to join the Navy and later died at sea. Looking on are the rural folk who do not understand anything of the ceremonial. They stare at the coffin: "Aah, silver fittings! Polished wood' they whispered to each other. 'What money! A year's wages! The Government must be paying, what a waste!... A year's wages! Good money!'" The sailors in crisp funeral array, the buglers sounding the "Last Post", the Firing Party, the National Flag draped over the coffin: "It was all for Govindan! It couldn't be, it couldn't be!" But the Chief Gunnery Instructor's mind goes back to Govindan's bravery the day when the Indian Navy mutinied against the British and faced them down. Yes, it happened – but who remembers? The boy who ran away, the popular messmate, the ship's hero during the Mutiny and now, being committed to Mother Earth under the mango tree he had planted. "The Admiral's eyes looked deeply into hers: 'Govindan died for his Motherland, that it might belong to his brothers and sisters'. The crows feet crinkled round the Admiral's eyes as a dawning radiance glimmered in hers...' Vande Matharam' he said. 'Vande Matharam,' she repeated softly, holding herself erect in the purple twilight."

Yes, this book speaks to me of the days we were both privileged to live in days of joy and ideals. Raja Proctor wrote a novel "The Fisherman's Daughter" which was made into a film: both very good. But his short stories remain my favourites.

There are many affinities between Australia and Sri Lanka and one such is the game of cricket. Here SHIRLEY W. SOMANADER extends the parallel with his contribution on the little known Methodist connection between the two countries.

'TWENTY THOUSAND SEE BRADMAN OUT FOR TWENTY'

This was one of the great headlines in a Sri Lankan newspaper in the summer of 1948 that screamed that the Australians, including the inimitable Bradman, were passing through Ceylon on their way to play the 'Ashes Series' in England. A beautifully coined English phrase that arrestingly claimed the attention of all Sri Lankans to things Australian in the 1940s. A brief stopover of an Australian cricket team always provided, in those days, a test of Sri Lanka's strength in cricket. It is many such impressive performances that propelled Sri Lanka into the Test arena.

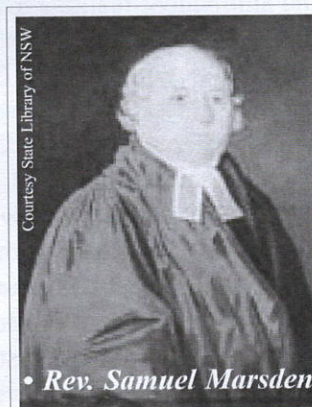
Cricket is certainly one of the many common interests between the two peoples that brought Australia close to Sri Lankans in the modern arena. There are other shared interests that bring together the two nations: An interest in the English Language, a devotion to democratic institutions and the cherishing of a common heritage enshrined in the Commonwealth of Nations. Later, when Sri Lanka decided to use Swabasha (either Sinhalese or Tamil) as an exclusive means of education and communication, many in Sri Lanka, especially the Burghers (a community of European/Asian mixed parentage born and long domiciled in Sri Lanka) decided to migrate to Australia because that country valued the contribution this community can make to nation building and hence opened its doors to welcome them. Still later, when the war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE or Tigers as commonly known) and the Government Armed Forces was raging, many educated and skilled Sri Lankans, both Sinhalese and Tamils, decided to move to countries like Australia because these places supposedly provided a safe haven to escape from killings, shootings, explosion of bombs and senseless destruction of property and people, that became a common occurrence in Sri Lanka in the 1950's and thereafter.

The Methodist connection

However, it is not about any one of these connections that I wish to write. I would like to contribute, and if relevant, even generate a

discussion on a little known or spoken aspect of the common connections between Australia and Sri Lanka. I wonder how many of us are aware of the early Methodist connections between the two countries. It is well known that one of the earliest Methodist stations in Asia was Sri Lanka. Dr Thomas Coke, the Methodist Missionary, and seven of his colleagues decided to come to Asia to proclaim the Methodist message in Christianity. They set out on New Year's Eve in December 1813. The Missionaries arrived in Galle, Sri Lanka, after a long, dangerous and arduous journey of six months, on June 29, 1814 sans their leader; because Coke had died on the journey and was buried at sea. Actually, only five of the original eight reached Sri Lanka in 1814, two of the missionaries dropped off in South Africa and Bombay respectively.

In 1816, the little Methodist Conference that convened in Galle decided to make Colombo their headquarters and spread out north, south, east and west to preach the Good News. The first Methodist church in Asia was built at Pettah in Colombo. It was from here that two of the original Methodist missionaries were sent later to work in Australia. Australia had already a small Methodist community in Sydney



because some of the original British settlers were Methodists. Samuel Marsden went as senior chaplain in 1800; his name now memorialised by Marsden Street in Sydney. Marsden had been converted under the



• Macquarie Street Methodist Church and parsonage, Windsor.

Methodists, and was a member of the Methodist Society at Leeds. While he was in Australia, in answer to his plea for a school master, Thomas Bowden, a Methodist Class leader arrived. Six months later Bowden wrote that he had three Methodist classes meeting regularly and in 1814, requested for a Methodist missionary. Samuel Leigh, a Staffordshire man, answered the call and Marsden gave him every support in his work.

At this point of Methodism in Australia, George Erskine (1821) and later John McKenny (1836), both trained and experienced missionaries as a result of their long stay and work in Ceylon were sent to Australia – first Erskine, and then McKenny, 15 years later. Both assumed leadership positions in the Methodist Church in Sydney during their time. They became chairmen of the district, McKenny succeeding Erskine. The work and achievements of these two Irishmen, who had previously done much good work in Sri Lanka for many years and who were familiar with the island and its people, makes interesting reading

GEORGE ERSKINE - In Ceylon from 1814 – 1821

He was a member of the pioneer missionary team that went to Ceylon. One of the seven ministers ordained by Thomas Coke in December 1813, Erskine was one of three missionaries offered by the Irish Methodist

conference to strengthen Coke's mission to Asia. The others were James Lynch and John McKenny.

The missionaries arrived in Galle, Sri Lanka, three miles off the coast. Two boats were sent out to bring them ashore, a larger one for the three with all their baggage. However, the three Lynch, Squance and Clough used the smaller boat to reach ashore. The other two, Ault and Erskine, were left behind with the baggage to come in the larger boat. Ault and Erskine failed to arrive that night. The other three were extremely anxious. Strong winds and the tide had carried them a mile further east. They arrived in the middle of the night at Weligama bay, one mile away. However, the five were reunited by morning of the next day.

On Monday July 11, they met to decide on some important questions. Should we separate so far and to so many places in the island? They might have chosen to remain together but decided instead to act in the spirit of Wesley and Coke to embrace the whole island. Lynch and Squance went north to Jaffna, Ault went alone to the east, Clough remained in Galle in the West and Erskine was stationed in the South in Matara.

Erskine had only a short distance to travel to his station from Galle. He arrived without much difficulty. He preached on Sundays at the Dutch church, began to learn Sinhalese and started an English school for boys. He made friends with the local officials and befriended a German missionary, Rev. J. G. Erhardt who had come to Ceylon under the direction of the London Missionary Society in 1805. During his nine months at Matara, Erskine suffered much indisposition. In 1815, he moved to Galle. From here, he was sent to Trincomalee in the East; and was there till 1821, in which year he was transferred to NSW in Australia because he failed to learn Tamil. However, the British soldiers stationed in Trincomalee were grateful to him for his services.

In Australia from 1821-1836

He worked in Australia as Chairman of the New South Wales District for 15 years. During his tenure in NSW, things reached a distressingly

(Continued on page 20)

low level. But Erskine was not to be blamed entirely. Some of the reasons attributed for this state were: the missionaries were divided among themselves; they were also at cross-purposes with the local population and the Missionary Committee in London. Among the factors contributing to the strained relationship with London were delays in communication; uncertainty and disagreement over the District's role on such matters as the acceptance of candidates for the ministry, the stationing of ministers, finance and the feeling in NSW that one-sided reports from anonymous sources were receiving too much credence in London. Relations deteriorated to such an extent that, in 1831, a decision was taken to recall George Erskine. When the Committee wrote to him conveying their decision, Erskine denied the charges leveled against him. He received support from a strongly worded message sent from NSW to London by stewards, leaders and other influential members. Erskine, as pointed out, was not to be blamed for this state of affairs. British irreligion, the classes of people Methodism had not reached at home were settlers in a penal colony and the material attractions of tantalising promises of land to settlers, were some of the problems that the mission had to overcome in Australia. Seen in this light, it is not surprising that progress was difficult. However, there was no denying the weakness of the mission. Membership returns in 1830 showed a total of 113 - an increase of just 30 in ten years.

JOHN McKENNY: In Ceylon from 1816 - 1847 - Early Life

Little is known of the early life of John McKenny. He was born in Coleraine, Northern Ireland around 1788; he had a Church of Ireland (Anglican) upbringing. Then coming under Methodist influence, he entered the Methodist ministry in 1813. He was one of the seven ministers initially ordained by Rev. Coke in that year. In the same year he was appointed for overseas mission in South Africa and sailed with the other seven pioneer missionaries from Portsmouth in 1814. Thereafter, there were three phases in his labours - in Cape Colony, South Africa as the first Wesleyan missionary in South

Africa from 1814-1816; in Ceylon from 1816 - 1835 and in New South Wales, Australia from 1836 - 1847.

In South Africa

When he arrived in South Africa, there were already upwards of 60 Methodists, mostly British soldiers, stationed there. The Governor refused him permission to preach in Cape Town. The reason given was that there were already Church of England chaplains there and that the Dutch Reformed Church, then established in the Colony, was not favourable to a ministry among Blacks. The Governor suggested that McKenny should move to the interior and preach to the native people there. McKenny took the view that he had been appointed by the Wesleyan Methodist Missions Society (WMMS) to preach in the town. But this argument did not move the Governor. McKenny did not want to defy the Governor out of a sense of duty as a British subject. However, he met the leaders and local preachers in his own home a few times. 'It is necessary', he wrote, 'to be very careful that we do nothing, through mistaken zeal, that would injure the work'. Since the restrictions on his activity were not lifted, McKenny felt obliged to transfer to Ceylon. He came to Ceylon in 1816 and worked in the South of the island till 1836. One of the most significant initiatives McKenny took while in Ceylon was to acquire a site of three acres at Kollupitiya in 1824, when the fish bazaar moved beside the original mission site. But it proved to be an inspired move. The Sri Lankan Methodist Church Headquarters, the House of the President of the Conference, and the Methodist College, all stand on this land today. The rest of his beneficial work in Sri Lanka has been well documented in our history books and magazines.

In New South Wales - his mission among the Aboriginal inhabitants

McKenny succeeded George Erskine as Chairman of New South Wales District in 1836. His work in NSW was blessed with much success though not in the way the WMMS anticipated. A letter from WMMS to McKenny reiterated some of the mission's principles. It said that the funds of the WMMS should be

directed towards mission among the Aboriginal inhabitants. If a successful mission could be established among these people it would have much stronger hold on the public mind in this country. But three years passed and little progress was made in this regard despite much endeavour. McKenny admitted failure in his report to the WMMS and quoted the following reasons: the missionaries had problems in acquiring the tribal language; government assistance was slow; the relationships between the missionaries involved in it were bad; Aborigines were antagonised by the violent behaviour of the white population towards them; and many were dying of disease and alcoholism and loose moral behaviour introduced by the convict settlers.

Success of his work among the Colonial population

McKenny's achievements were largely in connection with the Colonial population. In 1830, six years before McKenny arrived, the Methodist membership returns showed only 113 members in the NSW District. The membership increased five-fold during his chairmanship. He established a good relationship with the Governor and with the leadership of other denominations. The Methodist church received an allowance equal to that raised by private subscription for chapels and schools from the Government. The Governor ordered payment of 1200 British Pounds for outfit and passage of eight priests, who arrived in Australia. Government support was also received for work in Sydney, Melbourne, Parramatta, Windsor, Bathurst and Maitland.

He tactfully overcame the opposition showed by the Anglican Bishop of NSW

McKenny's last years were beset by difficulties. He found it increasingly difficult to maintain his position as Chairman. He came under attack from some of his missionary colleagues over stationing and other matters. He found himself out of favour with a small group within the Church. By the time the Committee in London had decided to create a new post – that of General Superintendent in Australasia – McKenny was ready to step down. He died in Sydney on October 3, 1847.

A Short Assessment of his Work

McKenny was wise, far-reaching and industrious. It is no exaggeration to say that he rescued Methodism in NSW. Its membership went up from 113 to 575 during his chairmanship. He put it on a secure footing, enhanced its position in relation to other churches and enabled it to reach out to new areas.

AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I would like to make an appeal in behalf of the Sri Lankan Methodists to those who can help in (a) Providing further information on the life and work of these two ministers Erskine and McKenny in Australia. (b) In Sri Lanka we have photos of all the original eight Methodist missionaries who came out to Ceylon in 1814, except that of George Erskine. If a photo of Erskine is available in some archive or library in Australia, we here in Sri Lanka will be immensely thankful for a copy for it. Whenever the history of the pioneer mission of Methodists is written, the photos of the eight are published with a blank square in the space for George Erskine!

JOURNAL REPRINTS

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 up to 5 issues.

Contact Hugh Karunanayake Int. + 61 2 9980 2494 or hkaru@optusnet.com.au

**Beneath this slab
John Brown is stowed,
He watched the ads
And not the road.**

– Ogden Nash (Good Intentions 1942)



Meals Ammi Made

Wattakka Kalu Pol

by Sunil Ranasinghe

Ingredients

- 1 kg pumpkin
- 2 tbsp Sri Lankan roasted curry powder
- 2 medium red onions, finely sliced
- 3 green chillies, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, finely sliced
- ½ tsp fenugreek seeds
- 1 tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp mustard seeds
- 1 tsp ground mustard
- 2 cups coconut milk
- 2 sprigs fresh curry leaves
- 1-2 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil

Thickening

- 2 tbsp rice, roasted and ground
- 4 tbsp desiccated coconut, roasted.

Preparation

Wash and cut pumpkin into cubes, leaving skin on. Heat oil and fry onions, curry leaves, garlic and green chillies in a large pot. Add mustard seeds. In a bowl, mix all the other ingredients with pumpkin and add to the pot along with coconut milk. Continue to cook over high heat until pumpkin is tender. Meanwhile, in a pan, dry toast short grain rice and coconut until brown & fragrant. Then blend into a powder. Add the ground roasted rice and desiccated coconut to thicken and flavour the curry a few minutes before cooking is complete.

(With acknowledgements to SBS Food Safari TV program)

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

Annual Dinner night trivia, November 22, 2009

This is an edited version of the trivia questions devised by THIRU ARUMUGAM for the entertainment of members and guests at the CSA Annual Dinner. Test your knowledge of Sri Lankan history. On completion you may refer to **answers on page 29**.

Q1 The registered name of the hosts of tonight's function is: (a) Ceylon Society of Anarchists; (b) The Ceylon Society of Australia; (c) Ceylon Society of Australia; (d) The Ceylon Society of Australasia.

Q2 Where was Ehelapola Maha Nilame incarcerated by the British: (a) Madagascar; (b) Mauritius; (c) Menik Farm; (d) Maldives.

Q3 The 15th century Trilingual Slab Inscription discovered when excavating foundations for a bridge near Galle and which is now a prized exhibit in the Colombo Museum has the text repeated in which of the following set of three languages: (a) Chinese, Persian & Tamil; (b) Portuguese, Latin & Greek; (c) English, Sinhala & Tamil; (d) Pali, Grantha & Brahami; (e) Sinhala, Prakrit & Hela.

Q4 In a recent talk to the CSA in Sydney, Ramya Panagoda described how she was

affected by the 2004 Tsunami when she was on a beach holiday. Where did it happen: (a) Cairns; (b) Pulmoddai; (c) Kuchchaveli; (d) Arugam Bay; (e) Nilaveli.

Q5 According to Mercator's Projection, which of the following is **not** the name, ancient or modern, in any language, of the southernmost point on the mainland of Sri Lanka: (a) Jovis Extrema; (b) Dondra; (c) Thondeswaram; (d) Devinuwara; (e) Dagana Civitas.

Q6 As far as it is known, which one of the following places was **not** the seat of power of a King in ancient Sri Lanka: (a) Dambadeniya; (b) Gampola; (c) Pomparippu; (d) Nallur; (e) Yapahuwa.

Q7 Sri Vickrama Rajasingha of Kandy in 1815 ceded power to the British who then controlled the whole Island. Immediately prior to this, where did the British win a battle which they later

Travel Tips



for visitors to
SRI LANKA

from Tony
& Srinii Peries

With the war's end, many expatriates and other tourists are holiday bound for Sri Lanka.

We visited Colombo for 24 days from December 14, 2009 and found much improvement from our last visit two years ago. People are more relaxed, and obviously spending freely. The traffic is still a nightmare with suicidal trishaws a major hazard. Even though there are far less check-points nowadays, on a Sunday evening, for no obvious reason, it took us over three hours to travel from Kurunegala to Colombo (58 miles). The Galle Road is less congested.

Most taxis are unmetered as are trishaws, and the practice is to fix a journey price before takeoff.

If you have a Sri Lankan ID card (age of same does not seem to matter) carry it at all times or carry your passport as it can be requested at checkpoints.

We stayed at the Cinnamon Lakeside Hotel run by the Cinnamon Group who also own the Cinnamon Grand. Two years ago we found it slightly better. Both hotels have five star ratings, and meet that standard with occasional lapses, some times due to a lack of English comprehension/expression. Even if you retain your old Sri Lankan accent and can speak Sinhalese you may find expression of complex issues in the vernacular not easy! Reception staff and cashiers are helpful and polite but tend to provide different answers at different times.

The buffet breakfast at the Lakeside is great value with a choice of Continental and Western and a full variety of the usual local food.

The dining room is a 24-hour coffee shop and has a buffet for each main meal. There are three other restaurants: Thai, Singaporean, and Tapas styles. This goes for most top hotels with a choice of restaurants. A meal in a top restaurant at, say the Hilton, is about Rs. 4000 a head with drinks, for three courses. A pasta course at the Lakeside, is only Rs.400.

Restaurants abound and much cheaper meals are available with "Fountain House" in Slave Island operating again while in Mount Lavinia the "Lavinia Breeze" does good seafood at moderate prices.

We visited Galle/Hikkaduwa and the old New Oriental Hotel (N.O.H.) in Galle - now part of the very expensive Aman Chain- is a delightful place, still in old Dutch style: rooms are around US\$250 with suites at double or more. There were few guests. In Hikkaduwa which is now choc-a-block with shops and small guest houses; we stayed at the "Coral Sands" paying Rs. 15,500 for three (in two rooms) with half board. This hotel is right on the beach and great value. The beach hotels are well patronised at Bentota and other coastal spots.

Wages are low so tips are appreciated.

We flew with Singapore Airlines who give low priority to the Sri Lanka traffic as they arrive/depart around midnight/ 1.a.m. Other airlines like Emirates have more convenient schedules.

Customs/emigration are helpful and easy: the duty free shops are open all hours but inadequately staffed so buying on arrival can be trying. Be warned though - do not purchase duty free wine in Colombo (and even in restaurants and liquor shops) as poor storage is common, leading to spoilage.

Leave plenty of time when departing as even entering the terminal can be a scrum and hiring a porter for Rs. 200 or 300 will be money well spent.

QUIZ CONTINUED

commemorated by erecting a monument stating the name of the leader they vanquished:

- (a) Constantine Saa in Gannoruwa;
(b) Sangiliyan in Jaffna; (c) Van Anglebeck in Colombo; (d) Pandara Vannian in Mullaitivu;
(e) Saradiel in Utuwankanda.

Q8 Which one of the following was **not** a British Governor of Colonial Ceylon: (a) Edward Paget; (b) James MacKenzie; (c) Hercules Robinson; (d) Henry Blake; (e) Viscount Soulbury.

Q9 The Englishman Robert Knox was held prisoner by the King of Kandy for 19 years from 1660. Knox escaped and wrote the well-known book *A Historical Relation of the Island of Ceylon*. Which one of the following statements about him is **incorrect**: (a) His father's name was also Robert Knox; (b) He was a misogynist;

(c) He was a vegetarian; (d) Daniel Defoe was influenced by the book when he wrote *Robinson Crusoe*; (e) He was 19-years old when taken prisoner.

Q10 Which one of the following was **not** an Appointed MP in the Parliament of Ceylon in 1956: (a) R.P.Gaddum; (b) Rosslyn Koch; (c) R.S.V.Poulier; (d) R.Singleton-Salmon; (e) A.Doubleton-Trout.

AT THE PEAK

The
first Englishman who
ascended Adam's Peak was
Lieut. Malcolm of the 1st Ceylon Regiment,
who reached the summit on April 27, 1827.

— Asiatic Journal Vol. 1



Absorbing & educative

Gerhard Kapitan: "Records of Traditional Watercraft from South and West Sri Lanka"

BAR (British Archaeological Reports)

International Series No. 1931

Prepared for publication by Somasiri Devendra and Gerald Grainge

Published by Archaeopre, publishers of British Archaeological Reports, Gordon House, Oxford, England in association with The Nautical Archaeological Society, Portsmouth and with the support of The Postgraduate Institute of Archaeology University of Kelaniya.

ISBN 978 1 4073 0413 7

Price: Rs. 4000.00 (Four Thousand) about \$40.00 AUD.

REVIEWED BY Stefan D'Silva

The question that comes to mind is what Sri Lanka as a nation would have lost if Kapitan, Devendra and Grainge had *not* compiled this valuable piece of work? The answer: the loss of a segment of nautical culture and history that is central to the ancient culture of the people of Sri Lanka. The emphasis on the word 'Traditional' alerts the reader to the significance of the information within the book as it records, in immaculate detail, a history that has largely been missed by many others. The book is more valuable than ever as the impact of the 2004 tsunami wiped out the vast majority of the traditional craft in use and with that 'wipe out', a significant chunk of a nation's history was also swept out to sea.

Kapitan has done a remarkable job, which has now seen the light of day due to the efforts of Devendra and Grainge. Though the ugly social conflict of 1983 deprived Kapitan of travel to the East and the North of the country thereafter in pursuance of his research and photographic records, this dedicated Marine Archaeologist and Ethnographer's determination to record the (fast disappearing) traditional watercraft of Sri Lanka is truly commendable. "In February 1983" he states, "I decided to stay for sometime in Sri Lanka". He is referred to as a modest man, whose focus on the task led him to lodge in modest dwellings along the Southern Coast and associate with the fisher folk who, no doubt, 'fed' his determination to record the history of the craft they used. One can only hope Devendra,

Professor Vini Vitharana (a chapter of whose work is included in the book) and others will attempt to salvage what history is left in the North and East of the country.

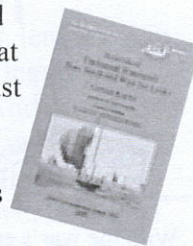
Kapitan's work records the last of Sri Lanka's working boats with dugout hulls – the *ORU*.

In the terms of nautical archaeological studies and related research, his study of the *oru* is tipped to remain unmatched.

As impressive as the great range of photographs are the scale drawings (1:20). One Hundred and seventy photographs and 62 scale drawings make this a most comprehensive piece of work. Kapitan essentially establishes five categories of watercraft; *rafts, Vallam, Oru, Angula and Ma-del-paru*. Each of the categories is further divided into sub categories: for instance, 36 types of *oru* are identified and six types of *ma-del-parus*. His classifications are based on the methods of fishing, variations in the conditions of deep sea fishing and the characteristics of the local beaches. His attention to detail is obvious.

It is fortunate that Kapitan teamed up with Devendra (former President of the Colombo Chapter, CSA), another like minded expert in nautical history who immediately saw the value of the work Kapitan had achieved and steered the material towards publication. It is also fortunate, for the history of a nation that Gerald Grainge, Series Editor of the Nautical Archaeology Society Monograph Series, an expert on ancient boats, contributed to the work in acknowledgement of Kapitan's research. Two years of hard, dedicated work by Devendra and Grainge led to the publication of this book. The recording of the Sinhala and Tamil words for the various watercraft may have been essential in the drafting of the book; today, that detail has a whole new significance in trying to mend fences in post conflict Sri Lanka. Ray Wijewardene, Sri Lanka's solo Olympic yachtsman and Professor Vini Vithana also contributed to make this book a benchmark in the field of nautical research. The chapter "The making of an *oru* in Sri Lanka" is an extract from Professor Vithana's book 'The *Oru and the Yathra*'. The combined knowledge of all of the above indicates the depth of expertise that lies within the pages of *Records of Traditional Watercraft from South and West Sri Lanka*.

Apart from being of value to Sri Lanka as a record of nautical heritage and nautical culture, the book is a must read for any person who enjoys travelling along the coast or inland Sri Lanka. I



Book reviews ... continued

found a new interest in every backwater, lake, lagoon, 'Wewa', estuary and local beach. I have found a new connection with the fisher folk and conversation comes easily. Long journeys in Sri Lanka will never be the same again.

An absorbing, educative read.

Back home to sweet home

From Hikkaduwa to the Carolinas – Memoirs of a Reluctant Expatriate

By Dr Lakshman Abeyagunawardene

ISBN 978-955-9098-84-3 Published December 2009. Rs 750.00, (approx. US\$ 7.50). Available from Vijitha Yapa's, Barefoot, Odel, Makeens, Lake House Bookshop, Sarasavi Book Shop, Kiyavana Nuwana, M.D. Gunasenas, Sri Lanka Medical Association Office or by email: luckyabey@gmail.com

This is a 168 page hard cover (laminated matt finish) book, illustrated with 48 photographs and sketches.

The content deals mainly with the author's journey and experiences from Hikkaduwa on the

South West coast of Sri Lanka where he was born, to the Carolinas on the East Coast of the United States where he opted to spend the last decade of his working life. It is really his memoirs that were written in what he now calls his home away from home – Columbia, South Carolina. Compiling the contents into book form was done after returning to his motherland and settling down to live the rest of his life in his new home at Kandawatte Road in Battaramulla, Sri Lanka. The final chapter titled "Changing Face of Battaramulla" was added almost as an afterthought, while compilation of the book was going on in the new-found environment of peace and tranquillity in his land of birth.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Book Review on page 24 of J48 for MUSINGS & MEANDERINGS

by Derrick Mendis SJ

ISBN 978-955-96636-1-4

carried incorrect contact details for obtaining copies in Australia. It should have read contact Michael Berman (02) 9416 7779

Email: MBerman@bigpond.net.au



Humour in the US Courts

Attorney: What was the first thing your husband said to you that morning?

Witness: He said, 'Where am I, Cathy?'

Attorney: And why did that upset you?

Witness: My name is Susan!

★★★★

Attorney: What gear were you in at the moment of the impact?

Witness: Gucci sweats and Reeboks.

★★★★

Attorney: Are you sexually active?

Witness: No, I just lie there.

★★★★

Attorney: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

Witness Yes .

Attorney: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

Witness: I forget.

Attorney: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

Attorney: Do you know if your daughter has ever been involved in voodoo?

Witness: We both do.

Attorney: Voodoo?

Witness: We do.

Attorney: You do?

Witness: Yes, voodoo.

★★★★

Attorney: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

Witness: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

★★★★

Attorney: The youngest son, the twenty-year-old, how old is he?

Witness: He's twenty, much like your IQ.

★★★★

Attorney: How was your first marriage terminated?

Witness: By death.

Attorney: And by whose death was it terminated?

Witness: Take a guess.

(With thanks to Hugh Karunanayake)

BOOKSHOP & WEB RESOURCES

BOOKS, MAPS & OTHER COLLECTIBLES

This column is a regular feature for the benefit of members who publish their books and other works and the others who wish the Society to sell material on their behalf. No charges apply to members **but donations are encouraged and gratefully accepted**. Others pay a handling charge. Please email the editor if you wish to take up this offer.

RARE CEYLON BOOKS for SALE

Seeing Ceylon: By R.L. Brohier - First Ed. Numbered Issue (No: 46). A\$100.00

Savage Ceylon By R.L. Spittel Sec. Ed 1950. Slight Damage A\$ 75.00

The Real Ceylon By C. Brooke Elliot Rd. Ed. 1938. Fair Condition A\$ 75.00

Recollections of Ceylon By Rev. James Selkirk, Reprint 1993, As new Docs. Church Missi. Soc. work in Ceylon A\$60.00

Dutch Power in Ceylon 1658-1687 By Prof. S. Arasaratnam (Reprint-1988). A\$ 45.00

And many more books. Contact: e-mail: vama.vamadevan@gmail.com phone: 98251542 Sydney Write to: 3, Collie Court, Wattle Grove, NSW 2173

BOOKS on SRI LANKAN ART, ARCHITECTURE and ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology of Tissamaharama by Henry Parker, 2nd Edn, 1984, 96 pp., hard cover, publisher – Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, price A\$ 10.00 +P&H

The History of Irrigation and Agricultural colonization in Ceylon by RL Brohier, 2nd Edn, 66 pp., hard cover, 1998, publisher – Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, price A\$ 10.00 +P&H

Art of Isurumuniya by Chandra Wikramagamage, 2004, 46 pp., 30 colour plates, 2 black & white plates, soft cover, Publisher – Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, price A\$ 15.00 +P&H

Tantric Buddhism & Art of Galvihara by Chandra Wikramagamage, 2009, 90 pp, 52 colour plates, hard cover, publisher – Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, price A\$ 30.00 +P&H

Architectural Remains Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka by JG Smither, revised edition by Chandra Wikramagamage, 1993, 103 pp., 67 black & white plates containing 49 drawings and 15 photographs and a map of Anuradhapura, hard

cover, publisher – Academy of Sri Lankan Culture, price AU\$ 85.00 +P&H

Copies available in Australia from P. Kumbukkage, email : mathn@bigpond.com

Cameos of Ceylon and other glimpses

S. Pathiravitana; 391 pp, soft cover
Godage International Publishers, Colombo, Sri Lanka 2008

The Diversity of Sri Lankan Wild Life

Jayantha Jayawardenen, 2008. For enquiries please contact Ralph Amerasinghe (02) 9871 8742 Mobile: 041 463 0848

Time & Chance by Siri Ranawake

Pandanus Books, 287 pp soft cover, available at Dymocks \$29.95 and in Sri Lanka at Barefoot.

Poems to the Creator

Shelagh Goonewardene. A collection of 35 poems accompanied by 20 colour photographs by Devinda Theo Goonewardene. Cover on Matt Art, text 95 pp on satin art paper. ISBN: 978-0-9805491-0-2. Published in September 2008. A\$15.00 + \$1.85 post & packing to all States. Email shelaghlou@yahoo.com.au

Alluring Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka's Wild Life

A personal photo journey by Stefan D'Silva Available direct from Stefan. Contact: Stefan@alluringsrilanka.com or PO Box180 Sutherland NSW 1499. A\$30 + P&H. For preview visit www.alluringsrilanka.com

Cricket at the High Table: Mahinda Wijesinghe. 140 pp coffee table presentation.

Price in SL Rs.2,750 + Rs 250 P&H. Others visit website www.mahindawijesinghe.com

The Sri Lankans: A Portrait of a Developing

Nation Martin Pieris. 304 pp. A mosaic of portraits and interviews of a cross section of Sri Lankans. \$60 + P&H. Contact Martin pieris@ozemail.com.au

Time Traveller: Wilfrid Jayasuriya; 332 pp, soft cover. Price AU\$ 15 + A\$8 P&H from Sri Lanka.

Contact Wilfrid – email:

wilfredjayasuriya@yahoo.com

Ph: Int + 9411 2695358. A few copies are available in Australia from Sumane Iyer – for payment details contact sumane@pacific.net.au

Websites worth a visit

www.ceylonsociety.com.au

www.alluringsrilanka.com

www.walkthetalk.com

www.sellipi.com/srilanka

www.lankalibrary.com

On a long journey of human life, faith is the best of companions.

– Prince Siddharta Gautama

SYNOPSIS OF MEETINGS

MELBOURNE SEPTEMBER 27, 2009

Dr Srilal Fernando introduced the speaker Mr Chandra Wickramagamage, Professor Emeritus, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, who presented Sigiri Alakamanda of King Kasyapa I (The Story of Sigiriya).

Since obtaining a Ph.D. from the University of Lancaster, England, he has worked at various universities in Sri Lanka including the Universities of Sri Jayawardenepura, Moratuwa, Kelaniya and Colombo. Professor Wickramagamage was an Archaeological Director working for UNESCO - Sri Lanka Cultural Triangle Project and has published several books in Sinhala and English.

Prof. Wickramagamage started his talk by showing photographs of the Sigiriya Rock (600 feet), water gardens and paintings from the gallery which gave the audience some insight into this magnificent rock fortress of King Kasyapa.

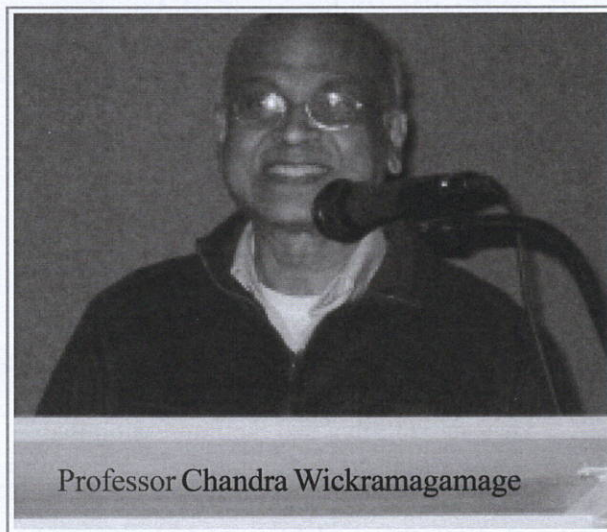
'Alakamanda' King Kasyapa I's (477-495 AD) second royal city was built on a summit of rock in Inamaluwa Korale, Matale district. 'Alakamanda' consists of three acres of space. Kasyapa is referred to as 'Kasyapa the Lord of Alakamanda' in an inscription found at Thimbiriwewa.

Sigiriya was called 'Sihigiri' from the 6th century with the iconic majestic figure of a lion on the main entrance. Later 'Alakamanda' became obsolete and 'Sihigiri' or 'Sigiriya' was prominent.

Kasyapa did not have the legitimate right to the throne after his father King Dhatusena. Kasyapa killed his father to rule Sri Lanka. As a Buddhist, patricide merits hell after death. In order to console his mind, Kasyapa built a massive castle complex on top of a rock and attempted to live like a god-king. Kuvera, who is the Lord of Wealth and the Guardian King of the North built his 'Alakamanda' on top of Mount 'Kailasa'. Dr S.Paranavithana compared this with Kasyapa's in an article presented to the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch).

The mirror walls, gardens, moats and ramparts, the palace complex and the main entrance were built by King Kasyapa. The monks who lived in the complex from the time of King Kasyapa till the end of the 10th century AD owned the other remains. The stone seat outside the palace complex was identified by most writers as the throne of the king, but monks had most likely used it for religious purposes.

Listed as a World Heritage Site in 1982, Sigiriya's main feature is the famous paintings of the beautiful female figures on the rock 42 feet above the mirror wall. There is no consensus currently on the dating, theme, style or school of these paintings.



A collection of about 1200 stanzas on the inner face of the mirror wall named 'Sigiri Graffiti' can be dated by analysing the style of the lettering. During the 6th century AD, after Kasyapa's death, no reference to the paintings was to be found in this poetry. The natural conclusion is that the paintings did not exist during Kasyapa's time. The likely dating of the paintings would be the second half of the 7th century AD.

The first Archaeological Commissioner H.C.P.Bell claimed that consorts of King Kasyapa had a golden skin tone while the maids had dark skin. He said that women were going to Pidurangala vihare. Both these theories are not well founded and can be dismissed.

In ancient Sri Lankan and Indian art six painting techniques were utilised. The artists must have followed the colours of the ladies in the society at that time. The master artists of Sigiriya paintings followed the basic principles of art and selected the sunset as their subject. According to a visitor, the golden and dark tones justify that they are indicative of the sunset (Sandaya). Dr Ananda Kumaraswamy claims that these ladies are nymphs (apsara) rather than human beings. It needs further evidence.

Dr S.Paranavithane compared the ladies to 'Vijjukumario' (lightening princesses) and 'Meghalatha' (cloud damsels). Dr Nandadeva Wijesekera disagreed with him. Based on the Sri Lankan Pali work 'Thupawamsa' he says that 'Vijjukumario' is simply another name for

(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 27)

'Meghalatha'. Prof. Wickramagamage agrees with Dr Wijesekera's argument. Prof. Abaya Arasinghe interpreted them as King Kasyapa's daughters - 'Bodhi' with the golden skin and 'Uppalavanna' with the dark skin tones. However, this interpretation too became invalid.

The ladies are also considered as stars. Some art historians consider Sigiriya paintings to be related to the School of Ajantha paintings. Although there are similarities, the anatomy and style of the paintings have no relationship.

The monks of the Abhayagiri Vihare School of Art must have completed the paintings while Sigiriya was controlled by them after Kasyapa's death. The Abhayagiri Vihare monks developed Sigiriya other than a palace complex with monastic art and architecture.

Dr Raja De Silva had the impression that Sigiriya was a Mahayanic monastery. Sigiriya was occupied by monks of Abhayagiri Vihare for five centuries. With the available evidence one can be convinced that the artists of the Abhayagiri Vihare were responsible for the Sigiriya paintings.

Chemicals were used to clean the paintings after an attempt to destroy the paintings sometime back, after which they appear white. Some believed that there is a Christian association to Sigiriya, but the speaker pointed out that this was incorrect. There were 500 paintings originally.

Books published by Prof. Wickramagamage were available for sale. After the usual convivial sharing of cups of tea, the meeting was concluded. Mrs Sirima Jayaweera was the lucky winner of the raffle drawn by Prof. Chandra Wickramagamage.

— *Dilhani Kumbukage*

COLOMBO - December 5, 2009

The meeting commenced with a Welcome Address by the Secretary in the absence of the outgoing President Mr. Somasiri Devendra, who was unable to attend due to ill health. After welcoming the Guest Speaker, the Members and the Guests in attendance, and the visiting President of the CSA from Australia Mr. Sunil de Silva, the Secretary gave a brief Introduction of the new President - Chulie de Silva.

Chulie in her address said she considered it an honour and a privilege to take up the position and thanked the members for the confidence placed in her. She pointed out that the CSA CC provides an interesting interactive place for dialogue and said she would give of her best to

strengthen the Colombo Chapter and make these quarterly meetings interesting. She urged both the Officers as well as the general membership to extend their fullest cooperation.

She introduced the speaker for the day Mr. Haris de Silva- Retired Director, National Archives, as a keeper of Sri Lanka's national records. Mr. de Silva, a historian, has spent his entire career at the archives.

Mr. de Silva's presentation titled "**The Ambition, Disunity, Conspiracy and the Tragedy of 1815,**" examined the power play in the Kandyan court, the events and key personalities that lead to the fall of Kandy.

He presented two causes that contributed to the downfall. One was the Treaty of 1766 signed between the Dutch and the king of Kandy and the other the "Malabar factor" which had its beginning with the coming of 'princesses' from Madura to be betrothed to the kings of Kandy.

De Silva quoted comments made by Dr Colvin R de Silva, in 1931, when he said: "The Treaty of 1766 made the Kingdom of Kandy an island within an island, a land-locked dominion without means of direct egress to the sea. Divorced from all progressive influences and deprived of all contact with the outer world, it tottered to its fall in 1815." This statement has not gone uncontested by later research, but by and large the assertion seems to hold water.

The peculiar situation in Kandy was that the chief queens - *randoli* - from Sri Vira Parakrama Narendrasinha (1707-1739) onwards produced no male heirs to the throne. The most likely explanation given by the speaker was that the queens were barren as the kings had offspring from secondary wives - for instance Mampitiye Disava's granddaughter had six daughters and a son from Kirti Sri Rajasinha (1747-1782).

Not having an heir, led to the practice of a queen's brother(s) who had come with the queen-to-be became nominated as the successor. Tracing the genealogy De Silva showed how this became conspicuous during the time of Sri Vikrama Rajasinha.

The Kandyan court seems to have had pro-king and anti-king or pro-Malabar and anti-Malabar factions. It was one of the grounds on which Pilimatalaue, Maha Adikaram, wanted to get rid of his own protégé, and once again establish a Sinhala dynasty with him as the founder. However, the disunity among the Kandyan chiefs prevented Pilimatalaue realising his ambitions, leading him to seek British assistance. Much as Pilimatalaue wanted to use



A Warm Welcome to New Members

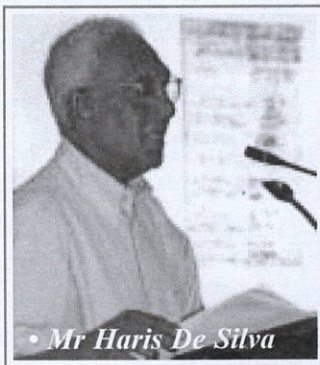
Ms Cheryl Mary D. D'Abrera, St Clair, NSW; **Dr Sirian & Kamala De Silva**, Merewether, NSW; **Mrs Chulangani De Silva**, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka; **Bill & Kathleen Mackie**, Vermont, Victoria; **Dr Arumai-nayagam & Mary Lida Wijayaratnam**, Glen Waverley, Victoria; and **Dr Rajaratnam & Annaladchumy Natkunam** of Annandale, QLD. who joined since Journal 48.

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION of four issues of The Ceylankan awarded by CSA member in Canada **Rohan Van Twest** to **Maya & Marion Herath of Parkinson, Queensland**.



the British to realise his aims, the British wanted to use him to annex the kingdom to the British crown. In the first instance, the designs of both Pilimatalauve and the British failed. The exposure of the conspiracy led to the execution of Pilimatalauve by Sri Vikrama Rajasinha, the puppet he had put on the throne.

The second and final episode started with Ehelepola. Here too the undeclared intentions of both Ehelepola and the British were the same as in



• *Mr Haris De Silva*

the first instance. By this time King Sri Vikrama Rajasinha had become extremely unpopular with both the chiefs and the people, by his cruel punishments and action contrary to accepted rules of government and tradition. The

rebellion of Ehelepola, where British support was to be a key factor, was a failure; D'Oyly prevaricated and did not support him in time of need.

Defeated, Ehelepola fled to the British territory and provided information for a successful invasion of Kandy. The disunity of the Kandyan chiefs, their distrust of each other greatly helped the British to control and annex the Kandyan kingdom to the British crown in 1815.

A lively question and answer session followed the presentation. Questions focused on the genealogy, language used in the court, and

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Have you recently changed your contact details - postal &/or email address, phone numbers etc. If so, Treasurer Upali Dharmakirti would like to hear from you so he can update his mailing list. This will also help ensure you receive the Journal without interruption. Contact Upali on phone (02) 99860337
Email: upalid@optusnet.com.au

ANSWERS TO QUIZ on PAGE 23

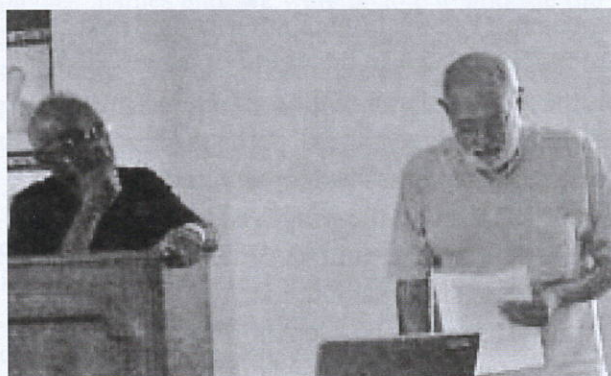
Q1 (c) Ceylon Society of Australia **Q2** (b) Mauritius **Q3** (a) Chinese, Persian and Tamil **Q4** (e) Nilaveli **Q5** (a) Jovis Extrema **Q6** (c) Pomparippu **Q7** (d) Pandara Vannian in Mullaitivu **Q8** (e) Viscount Soulbury **Q9** (c) He was a vegetarian **Q10** (e) A Doubleton-Trout

whether Ehelepola was a traitor and whether there were any gains for Sri Lanka's development by becoming a British colony.

The meeting terminated for fellowship after the usual vote of thanks made by the Secretary. In his vote of thanks Daya expressed grateful thanks to the ex- President Mr. Somasiri Devendra, on behalf of the entire Membership, for his dedicated service to the Chapter.

- *Chulie De Silva*

CORRECTION



Our caption to this photograph (above) to illustrate the Colombo meeting of September 12 published in J48 was incorrect. It should have read: "A captivated guest speaker Professor Ananda Gunatilaka (left) with President Somasiri Devendra introducing the topic for the night." We apologise to both Prof. Ananda Gunatilaka and President Somasiri Devendra for the error.



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The Sri Lankan Leopard (*Panthera pardus kotiya*) is an established subspecies of leopard endemic to Sri Lanka. It remains one of the most thrilling sights to behold in some of the National Parks. Indeed today the Yala National Park is considered one of the best places in the world to see leopard. It is the apex predator in the land. Sometimes called a secretive animal, perhaps elusive is a better description. The leopard is adaptive enough to live on the fringes of human settlement given minimal, suitable habitat and on the fringes of manicured tea estates (if not among the tea itself). Depending on their location, a wide and varied diet of small mammals, deer, monkeys, rodents, dogs and even the odd porcupine contributes to their versatile existence. As recently as mid 2009, a "black Leopard" or melanistic leopard was captured in the hills of Sri Lanka. They are considered an endangered species; undoubtedly, the rapidly expanding human settlements resulting in diminishing habitat, contributes to this endangered classification.



• A leopard digging into a ravenous mouthful of Sambhur.



CSA PUBLIC MEETINGS

NEXT SYDNEY MEETING
Sunday February 28 at 6.30 p.m.

INDRA JAYAWARDENE, Coastal Engineer,
Naturalist and Beachcomber, will speak on:
*Beachcombing and diving in South West Coast
of Sri Lanka 1973 -1990*

Venue: Thornleigh Community Centre.
Corner Phyllis & Central Avenues (off Pennant
Hills Road) Thornleigh.

Further details from Chandra Senaratne
(02) 9872 6826 or Thiru Arumugam
(02) 8850 4798

Meeting will be followed by the usual social.

MELBOURNE CHAPTER

**No meetings have been scheduled for the
Melbourne Chapter at the time of going
to press.**

COLOMBO CHAPTER

**Next meeting is scheduled for Saturday
March 6. Venue and other details will be
notified to members and public
when finalised.**

About the Ceylon Society of Australia (CSA)

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 would enjoy a quarterly meeting in reasonably modest and intimate surroundings. The Colombo Chapter caters to CSA members in and passing through Sri Lanka, and the Sri Lankan public! Likewise, the Melbourne Chapter covers members and others residing in and visitors to Victoria.

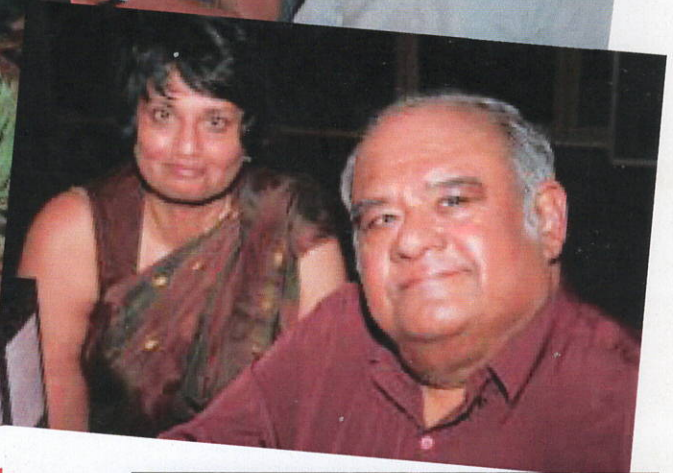
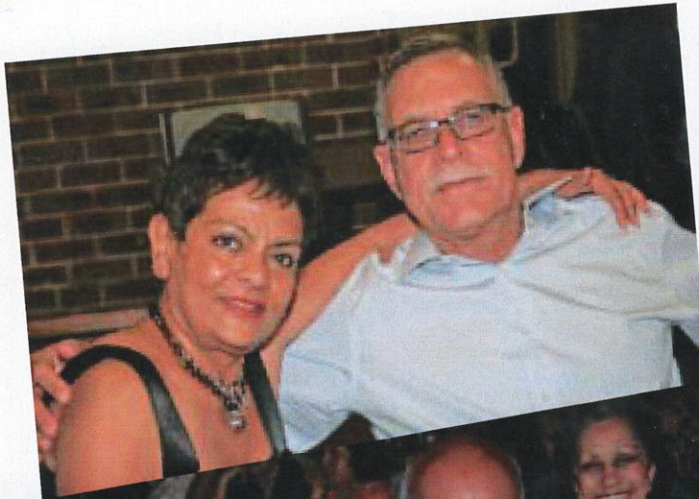
YOUR MEMBERSHIP... ... KEEP IT CURRENT!

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

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

Overseas members are kindly reminded to send their remittances by Bank Draft in Australian currency or pay by using SWIFT Code CTBAU2S. Personal cheques in foreign currency cannot be accepted. Sri Lankan **resident members** have the option of paying in Rupees to the Local Treasurer. Please refer to inside front cover for contact details. **Annual subscription rates are:** All Members: AU\$ 30.00 Australian Pensioners: AU\$ 20.00 Sri Lankan-resident members: SLRs. 3,000 **For details about your subscription status please contact Upali on Int + 61 2 9986 0337**
Email: upalid@optusnet.com.au

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



At the CSA's Annual Dinner

Official business of an AGM is over. The evening is informal, friendly, full of camaraderie, much like a family gathering.

The guests are called on to partake in the traditional dinner - delectable fare, served buffet-style, from 8.00 PM onwards

Dinner over, Secretary Thiru Arumugam has everybody absorbed and head scratching in a trivia quiz on Ceylon's history and culture for the next 15 minutes.

Next, a promise fulfilled. The surprise. A comic skit. An elderly mother disillusioned on a visit to the Lucky Country and a domiciled daughter trying to appease her. A clever enactment by Sunil de Silva as mother and Malini Arumugam, the daughter (both in their own right accomplished theatre actors of repute in Sydney drama circles). The audience? In stitches of laughter!

Charmaine Vamadeva sits at the keyboard. A sing-along is inevitable. A reluctant end to a pleasant evening and another of CSA's successful years culminates.

Now enjoy this presentation of photographs that captures the spirit of the night.

