

The CEYLANKAN

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia

Newsletter # 9, February, 2000

EDITORIAL

A new millenium has arrived, but in reality it is no different to the preceding one - it is simply the passing of only one day! The challenge for the Ceylon Society of Australia at the start of this new millenium is to keep the interest in the organisation by the continual introduction of stimulating presenters at our meetings, and by keeping this journal, the CEYLANKAN, up to a standard that is meaningful, informative and sufficiently diverse so as to offer in each edition, articles most subscribers will find worth reading.

We could go over the top and have an elitist screed, catering to a small group of special interest people, or we can continue on the course we have embarked upon, one that seems to be doing the job we hoped it would do from its inception. Actually, if we are being analytical, this journal is developing at a comfortable pace and at this stage the format of many varied articles from contributors will continue. But we are also cogniscent of the need to change as time passes and appreciative of suggestions as to how we can improve. One suggestion that arrived this month was to no longer regard the CEYLANKAN as a news letter, a point well taken as it has become more of a Journal.

Another suggestion is to have a proper cover with something appropriate to show our 'roots', this too we are working on. Also we will try and eliminate the staples that we are employing at present to bind each edition. Bear in mind though, this is only edition number 9, and we are still amateurishly feeling our way. Senarath Panawatta has made these points and we appreciate his interest.

There is an article in this edition about the VOC and the voyages to and from Holland. Your editor has visited the *Batavia* in Darling Harbour, as the writer suggests, and found an extremely interesting vessel. If you have the opportunity to 'go aboard', then I urge you to do so. The ship is quite an amazing structure and to think that some of our ancestors travelled in such conditions is amazing....and frightening!

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THE GIFT OF TODAY

The Sri Lankan political differences between the north and the south bring together some interesting situations as the following story reveals.

Two men, one seriously ill from injuries received in the ongoing war, the other badly hurt in an unfortunate industrial accident, possibly a bomb blast, but both coming from opposite ethnic groups, occupied the same room in a Sri Lankan hospital. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. He had emphysema brought on by major injuries he received in the battle front. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back badly damaged by the accident, remaining totally immobile, unable to see the window or his roommate.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service (both had been involved), where they had been on vacation. And every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window.

The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods when his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and colour of the world outside. The window of their room overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every colour of the rainbow. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. The war zone could have been a million miles away.

As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the patient on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene. One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band - he could see it in his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the

lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seemed appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it for himself. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

The man called the nurse and asked what could have compelled his deceased roommate to have described such wonderful things outside this window when they were not actually real. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps because he knew his time was limited, he just wanted to encourage you, and to him each day was a bonus."

Epilogue. . . There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all of the things you have that money can't buy.

“‘Today’ is a gift, that's why it is called the ‘present’.”

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A TABLET BY SOPHIA MARSHALL: A.D.1820

....by Somasiri Devendra

The purpose of this note is to draw attention to a stone tablet, in Wellawatte, Colombo. Despite its prominent location, it attracts no attention. Yet, it remains unique in its own way, not only for its content but also because it opens a window on early British Ceylon. It is, therefore, considered worthy of attention, if for no other reason than to have it cleaned, protected and recognized.

The slab, which had been investigated nearly a century ago, is situated on the seaward side of Galle Road, at the southern end of the Wellawatte bridge, near the Savoy building. Tall and narrow, with parallel vertical sides, save for a pointed apex, it can be mistaken for a tombstone (dimensions: 141 cm x 39 cm x 21 cm). Many years ago, before it was obliterated under layers of paint and posters, I detected several incised letters which were, however, too faint to read or to identify. Even today, a letter or two can be made out but a thorough cleaning will reveal more.

It is commented on in J.P.Lewis' "Ceylon in Early British Times" (1913-14), which identifies the slab as that erected by Henry Augustus Marshall's wife, Sophia, in 1820, under the Banyan tree by the roadside near "Layard's Folly". He also furnishes a reading that was on it.

Henry Augustus Marshall was a young Englishman, educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford. He was considered a protege of Governor North and the best classical scholar in the island in his day (Toussaint). On his way to Ceylon, in 1798, Marshall broke journey at the island of St. Helena, where Napoleon was later to be briefly interned. There, he was hosted by Col. Robert Brooke, the Governor (1778-1801) whose daughter, Sophia, he married. He reached Ceylon with his bride in 1798.

The Governor in Ceylon, Sir Frederick North, had mixed feelings about young Marshall. "He is a young fellow of good parts and considerable erudition," he commented, "but a little of what we used to call at Eton 'a pretending fellow', owing to have lived too much with fine fellows in that noisy chaos, Devonshire House. I hope his marrying so comfortably as he has done will cure him of that defect." Marriage appears to have made him financially stable. Though Marshall, in course of time, built several residences, the socially popular couple lived in a "charming abode situated on the seashore about three miles from Colombo, and therefore at Wellawatte or Milagiriya." (Lewis). Marshall rose from Clerk and Copyist to Auditor and Accountant-General (Toussaint). By 1823 he had been appointed Auditor-General, a post he held till his death in 1841. He was commonly referred to as "Inequity Marshall", perhaps for the reason that there was already an "Equity Marshall" - the Hon. Sir Charles Marshall, Puisne Justice (1828-1833) and later Chief Justice (1833-1836) till he was stripped of office and pension for participating in a duel (Lewis). Another reason given for the name was that he was suspended and remained unemployed from 1810-1816 due to some irregularities in the Stamp Office (Toussaint, quoting from E.B.F. Seuter's unpublished papers on the Ceylon Civil Service). However, the facts that Sir Robert Brownrigg, who is

credited with having reformed and cleared the Civil Service of corruption, had found him worthy of re-instatement, and that he (Marshall) was subsequently promoted to Auditor-General, seem to indicate that his name was not sullied by this incident.

The Lewis reference to the tree and slab being near “Layard's Folly”, gives the impression that the slab and the canal were contemporaneous. But they were not. Marshall’s contemporary was C.E.Layard who, Marshall suspected, coveted his post of Auditor- General.

It was his son, Sir C.P.Layard, born eight years after the date inscribed on the slab, who was responsible for the “Folly”. As Government Agent of the Western Province, he had conceived a grand plan to drain away part of the flood waters of the Kelani ganga by linking the Kotte-Kirillapone-Nedimale canal to the sea at Wellawatte. As it turned out, the canal bed was much higher than the flooded area and the project came to be known as “Layard's Folly”. (The Economic Review). The defect was subsequently corrected and the canal functioned satisfactorily until Colombo's urban decay set in: by 1910 it was 1 mile 25 chains long, 50 feet broad with banks of natural sand and had a navigable depth of 3 feet 6 inches.(The Ceylon Manual).

By the banks of the canal that was to be, stood the Banyan tree which Sophia had made it her special mission to tend. Her motive can best be judged from the sentiments expressed in the verse. It shows her appreciation of and caring for the tree, and embodies a poignant wish for Sophia herself to be remembered as the benefactor of the tree and of those who enjoyed its sheltering shade. It is an all-too-human wish for some modest degree of immortality.

Lewis, himself, found the letters “half worn” but they can be “still read, but with difficulty”. Yet he has reproduced it in full. Perhaps he filled in the blanks or had access to another source he does not mention? (Toussaint, too, acknowledges no other source.) Both Lewis and Toussaint read the inscribed verse as follows:

m in mercy bends,
alike extends,
f his weary way,

Shelters from storm and shades from solar ray,
Breathe one kind wish for her, one pious prayer,
Who made this sheltering tree her guardian care,
Fenced in from rude attacks the pendent shoots,
Nourished and framed its tender, infant shoots,
O traveller, if from milder climes you rove,
How dearly will you prize this Indian grove.
Pause then, awhile, and ere you pass it by,
Give to Sophia's name one grateful sigh.
A.D.1820"

The sentiments and style of the verse indicate a personal authorship and Lewis comments that she appears to have been influenced by Tennyson's "Marmion", Canto VI, which refers to an inscription on " Sybil's well".

Lewis adds: “We fear that nobody now notices the stone or deciphers its ‘half worn letters’, and that consequently Sophia's touching appeal is wasted on the dusty air of the Wellawatte Road.” The position today is the same.

Marshall never went “back home”. He died on 23rd. January, 1841, and was buried in Galle Face Cemetery. Sophia and their two sons erected a tablet in St. Peter's Church, Fort, in memory of “an elegant classical scholar and a sincere Christian”.(Toussaint). Of Sophia's fate, there is no mention: the tablet remains the only monument to both Sophia and her tree.

There is, however, another possible claimant to be the “Sophia” of the tablet. Toussaint records that Mr Justice Walter Perera (no reference given) recalled his (Justice Perera's) father, telling him that Sophia, was either Lady Brownrigg or the Governor's sister, and had the tablet erected by “some officer of the Regiment stationed at Mount Lavinia.” Sir Robert Brownrigg's Lady (or sister) “had the tree attended to” and “directed that the tree formed a beautiful bower or arch over the road”.

To accept Sophia Marshall as the more likely author, I have taken into account that the poem shows no sign of being “ghost written”. It is suggested that the sentiments in the poem indicate a very personal involvement with the care of the tree as well as in the composition of the verse. Perhaps her husband, “the elegant classical scholar”

helped her. The other Sophia appears to have tended the tree much as an absentee landlord would have done, and had some other person erect the tablet.

Another reason I have for favouring Sophia Marshall is that she lived near the site (“Wellawatte or Milagiriya”). The other claimant must have lived in Governor's House in Mt. Lavinia (or Colombo).

Unfortunately, Toussaint, while acknowledging his debt to Lewis and Seuter, gives us no reference to his quotation from Mr. Justice Perera. Since the references to Seuter, also, are from unpublished papers, I have had no access to them. Certainly, childhood memories, based on an oral tradition, have their place as source material; but here, even the identity of the “rival” claimant is unsure. Lewis and Seuter were contemporaries, but Lewis's references to Sophia are published, while Seuter's are not. Toussaint's publication of Seuter's references is some twenty years after Lewis's. In these circumstances, I prefer to identify Sophia Marshall as the author, following the earliest known published reference, by Lewis, who served in Ceylon in 1877-1910, but continued his researches till about 1923.

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.....Somasiri Devendra.

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A SNIPPET ABOUT TEA....

We hear about the first pioneers of the tea industry in Ceylon and realise the industry most certainly developed after the devastation of the coffee plantations from disease in the latter part of the 1800s, but an interesting paragraph in Robert Percival's *An Account of the Island of Ceylon, 1803*, reads as follows:

‘But it is not sugar alone that Ceylon seems destined to afford to the general use of the western world; the tea-plant has also been discovered native in the forests of this island. It grows spontaneously in the neighbourhood of Trincomallee and other northern parts of Ceylon. General Champagne informed me that the soldiers of the garrison frequently use it. They cut the branches and twigs, and hang them in the sun to dry; they then take off the leaves and put them into a vessel or kettle to boil, to extract the juice which has all the properties of that of the China tea leaf. Several of my friends have assured me that the tea was looked upon as far from being bad, considering the little preparation it underwent. The soldiers of the 80th made use of it in this manner on being informed of its virtues and quality by the 72nd regiment whom they relieved. Many preferred this tea to coffee. I have in my possession a letter from an officer in the 80th regiment, in which he states that he had found the real tea-plant in the woods of Ceylon of a quality equal to any that ever grew in China; and that it was in his power to point out to government the means of cultivating it in a proper manner. The vast advantages to be derived from the cultivation of the tea-plant in our own dominions, ought at least to prompt a speedy and vigorous experiment on the subject.’

Percival wrote this in 1803, and how many knew the tea plant, most certainly a variety of its Chinese namesake, was already indigenous to the Island!!

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TEA QUOTES....

“Although my neighbours are all barbarians,
and you, you are a thousand miles away,
there are always two cups on my table.”

.....Tang Dynasty

“Come, oh come, ye tea-thirsty restless ones - the kettle boils, bubbles and sings, musically.”

.....Rabindranath Tagore

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THE IMPORTANT MISQUOTE SECTION!!

If your parachute doesn't openare you jumping to a conclusion?

Is a chicken farmer an eggistentialist?

A sycophant....someone who stoops to concur.

If you have any great ideas, you should strike when the irony is hot!

How do you start a pudding race? Sago!

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More useless information!!!! (*We need to have a blend!!*)

Ingrown toenails are hereditary.

There are only four words in the English language, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous!!

Al Capone's business card said he was a used furniture dealer!

The muzzle of a lion is like a fingerprint: no two lions have the same pattern of whiskers!!

A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds. (*Now how did they work that out!!*)

Cranberries are sorted for ripeness by bouncing them; a fully ripened cranberry can be dribbled like a basketball!

A male gypsy moth can "smell" a virgin gypsy moth from 1 mile away.

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QUOTE.....

"...those superb names, long marvellous serpents with drumlike vowels: Anuradhapura, Polgahawela, Paravanalankulam, Kahatagasdigilva, Ambalantota...they say them so fast and so sweetly (they erase, rub out English, in the same way) that Anuradhapura makes something hardly more important than 'amena'".

.....Henri Michaux, "A Barbarian in Ceylon"

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*As your editor I have been accused of having a weird sense of humour, and as an ex-Kiwi I found this little item about my homeland so wonderful that I could **not** resist including it in this edition. Forgive me my transgressions, but have a laugh with me!!!*

LONG WHITE CLOUDED VISION

Once upon a time in the kingdom of heaven, God went missing for six days.

Eventually, Michael the Archangel found him. He enquired of God: "Where were you?" God sighed a deep sigh of satisfaction and proudly pointed downwards through the clouds and said, "Look son, look at what I have made."

Archangel Michael looked puzzled and said, "What is it?"

God replied, "It is a planet and I have put life on it. I have named it Earth and there is a balance between everything on it. For example, there is North America and South America. North America is going to be rich and South America is going to be poor. And the narrow bit joining them, that's going to be a hot spot. Now look over here. I have put a continent of white people in the north and another one of black people in the south. They are Europe and Africa"

The archangel then said, "And what is that long white line there?"

And God said, "Ah, that is New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud and that is a very special place. That's going to be the most glorious spot on Earth; beautiful mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, and an exquisite coast line. The people here are going to be modest, intelligent and humorous and they are going to be found travelling the world. They will be extremely hardworking, sociable and high achieving. And I'm going to give them this

superhuman rugby team which will be blessed with the most talented and charismatic specimens on the planet, who will be admired and feared by all who meet them.”

Michael the Archangel gasped in wonder and admiration but then, seeming startled, proclaimed, “Hold on a second, what about the BALANCE? You said there was going to be a balance”

God replied wisely, “Wait till you see the irritating, loudmouthed layabouts I’m putting in the country next to them!”

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Did you know?

After the Dutch took over Colombo the walled town was divided in two, viz the Fort, and the Pettah, which was separated from the Fort by a moat. The Pettah was in the early days where the Burghers lived. Outside the Pettah were the Chettys’ and the Moors’ quarters, and in Wolvendaal were the Malays - mostly Javanese at that time. At Kayman’s Gate was a guard-room which commanded the only outlet into the northern suburb, communicating with it by a bridge over what was euphemistically called the St John’s “River”, which in those days languidly flowed out into the sea round the old Portuguese bastion of St Joao on the site of later the fish market.

Colombo 200 years ago was a tight little city with its city-fathers, ward-masters, and freemen, its fire brigade, municipal markets, orphanages, schools and seminaries, its licensed butchers, bakers, tailors and shoemakers, its public-houses, arrack and toddy taverns and pawnshops, its jail and a house of correction for women, its lock-ups and stocks and a host of other useful institutions.

It was compulsory for 6 year olds to attend school, punishment for non-attendance, and the parents fined for not enforcing it, at the rate of half a “tambakasi” per child per day. Failure to attend church without sufficient excuse was punished with a fine of 4 tambakasis, and regular offenders were handed over to the Dissava for punishment.

Anyone who for no lawful reason hindered the publishing of banns of marriage was liable to pay a fine of 2 rixdollars, or made to work “ad opus publicum” for 2 months. Failure to marry within 3 months of the registration of the banns was punishable with a fine of 3 rixdollars or 3 months. For riding to church in a chaise or other conveyance for the registration of banns or the ceremony itself, the unhappy bridegroom had to pay 40 rixdollars to the military chest. The luxury of registering the banns at the residence of one of the parties was feed at 24 rixdollars, viz 12 to the military chest and 12 for the poor. Punctual attendance at church by the interesting couple on the 3 days on which the banns were published, and at the crowning ceremony, was enforced by a fine of 10 rixdollars for coming in after the third bell had stopped ringing, 20 rixdollars for a quarter hour after the 3rd bell, and 10 rixdollars more for each additional quarter hour.

No funeral could arrive at the cemetery after 5pm, penalty 10 rixdollars for every quarter hour after that time. All Chettys and Moors residing in Colombo were liable to pay 1 rixdollar per year for the privilege of wearing “papooses” “alparks”, or any other kind of shoes.

Burial fees for the cemetery in the Pettah were fixed at 4 rixdollars, 6 stivers, for a large grave including bier and shroud, 3 rixdollars for a medium, and 2 for a small one. Others such as slaves, who were buried without coffin or shroud, were charged 1 rixdollar for a grave outside the city.

All poor widows were given monthly doles, “even widows under 40 years of age,” who were to be paid from parish funds, “the ‘green bag’ being circulated not for the beggars of the city, but for the relief of poor parishioners.” Here is a curious rule dating perhaps from old feudal times in Ceylon, happily adapted by the Dutch to local conditions: “The washermen of the ward shall give information to the wardmasters of all births and deaths, or failing this, notice of the same shall be given to the Dissava, any omission being punishable by fine or imprisonment.”

Here is a nice distinction: “An unbaptised woman living in concubinage with a baptised man, or a baptised woman with an unbaptised man, shall, in case the unbaptised man or woman is not fit for baptism at the time of the general visitation, be made to work in chains *ad opus publicum* for 6 months. Two unbaptised people living in concubinage shall forfeit 6 rixdollars or work for 3 months. Anyone living in adultery shall be made to work in chains for one year without the option of a fine.”

One of the most considerable sources of revenue was derived from the sale of stamped paper. Two hundred and sixty years ago and more, “all requests and other applications made to the Government shall be stamped with a

stamp of 12 stivers.”

The fire brigade was apparently in great demand in those days of heavy pipe smoking, and the nursing of overnight embers by thrifty housewives for the cooking of the morning meal. In the event of a fire, the 3 fire engines “marked No 1, 2, and 3” raced to the spot, the watchmen sounded their rattles, the town bell rang frantically, and all male slaves and others told off for the purpose, assembled at their appointed places. The residents in the neighbourhood meanwhile cleared for action, leaving the way free to the wells in their compounds, and manned the fire buckets which were passed down a line of portly mynheers and comfortable juffrouws who with their engines, 24 to 36 foot ladders, hatchets, marline spikes, hooks for pulling down roofs and walls, and wet “fire sails” for isolating buildings, soon, it might be expected, put out the fire.

Adapted from an article in Plate's Ceylon Annual ..1933

Things have changed somewhat from these early times--mostly for the better.....

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There are 86 mammal species in Sri Lanka, 450 species of bird have been recorded, 54 species of fish are found in the waterways and marshes, 40 species of frogs and toads, 2 varieties of crocodile, 5 of turtle. Of the 83 species of snakes recorded, only 5 are poisonous (cobra, Russell's viper, Indian and Sri Lankan krait and the saw-scaled viper) - but these five are relatively common!

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The British took possession of the Cocos and Keeling Islands in 1857. These were already colonised by British subjects. Subsequently these islands were placed under Ceylon administration and eventually in 1886, under the government of the Straits Settlement.

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A SPECIAL MEETING.....

was held on Sunday 28th November, with Dr RK de Silva, author of three fine books about early prints on Ceylon, addressing a very interested audience on how he researched his subject and how printing developed over the years. Dr de Silva took us through the changes that have occurred with illustrative printing. How the early method involved engraving on wooden blocks, the picture required, in reverse of the original.

Newspapers in the last century would have artists at different places around the globe who would send the newspapers or magazines paintings or drawings that were copied by engraving for printing. Dr de Silva took us through the changes to modern times when the procedure is performed by photoengraving.

Many of the early artists were mentioned:

NB NB NB ...WE NEED MORE TO ADD TO THIS ARTICLE.....

Letters.....

Somasiri Devendra writes enquiring about a ship of the first World War but first mentions..... “In Plate's "100 best views of Ceylon", page one (my edition) is an overall view of Colombo harbour with a collection of steam and sailing ships. In it are seen the two tugs, "Samson" and "Goliath" on which my grandfather served. They were fitted out as minesweepers, to sweep the approaches to the harbour and he was awarded medals for this at the end of the war. I still have them.”

and... “Recently, a query came up on MARRHST-L (Maritime history of Lanka website), about another minesweeper named, "INDUSTRY", which was similarly fitted out but served in another theatre of war, which was finally returned to Colombo.

"The vast majority of the requisitioned vessels for the WW1 Mesopotamia campaigns came from India (with goodly numbers also from Burma, Singapore, the UK, as well as those already trading there). So far I have only identified one vessel as coming from Ceylon, on which I am missing a little data. Grateful for any help on the following:

“**INDUSTRY**”- a Ceylon Government twin-screw tug built and engined by Lobnitz &

Co, Renfrew in 1896 (yd 436) - 148grt 18nrt 105.6 x 20.2 x 8.6ft 2xT3cy 8"13"20"x16" 23nhp 280ihp 8½k; she was registered at Colombo ON 81084. In 1916 she was requisitioned as ST 27 (= sea & harbour tug). After the war she served with the fledgling Basrah Port Directorate from 1920 to 1922, when she returned to service at Colombo as **INDUSTRY**. She was apparently sold at auction for scrap sometime 1931-33. I am still trying to discover where and by whom she was scrapped - and looking for a photo."

Could you dredge your sources for any information? Thanks

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Also from Somasiri the following:

"Recently, I was given two booklets picked up in a flea market somewhere in Australia. One is a collector's piece, a "tourist" picture book of photographs, "The Hundred Best Views of Ceylon", similar to the one written about above. Apart from the intrinsic value of the pictures, showing how different the country was at the beginning of the century, is what has been handwritten on it. On the end paper, a young Australian soldier sailing to take part in WW1 has written a long letter to his mother, to whom he has sent the book. Dated 1st. March, 1917, the writer is Pte N.C.Kaehne, AIF 9/50 Infantry, number 3424. He gives his name as N.(for Norman) C.Kaehne, of 84, Rosetta Street, West Croyden, Adelaide. The voice is that of a young boy, going abroad for the first time, thrilled with the sights he is seeing. I wonder whether he survived the war and what happened to his unit. The tone of schoolboy writer reaches poignantly across the decades. If it is of interest, I can send the contents of the letter. Maritime content? He called at Colombo in a troopship with at least 600 soldiers aboard with him who all went to Kandy by train on a "tour".

Somasiri Devendra

Somasiri had several replies including.....

According to the Nominal Roll of the 1st Australian Imperial Force, 3424 Pte Norman Charles Kahne (not Kaehne, although this may be a clerical error) enlisted in the AIF on 17 October 1916. He returned to Australia on 16 June 1919. As for Kahne's unit, he served with the 50th Battalion, 13th Brigade, 4 Australian Infantry Division.

For the benefit of those who were interested in the contents, it is included here.

"March 1st.1917

Colombo

Pte Kaehne AIF 9/50 Infantry number 3424

On active Service.

Dear Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know that I am alright hoping you are the same. We are having a good time I saw what I will never see again was yesterday I and all the rest about six hundred of us went to Kandy that is about 72 miles from Colombo it only cost us two shilling and eight pence there and back my word the best picture in the world. We was about 1689 feet above sea level we went through six tunnels they were all different lengths some about half a mile and all the cocoanut trees and all the trees, all blacks there are only about thirty white people there altogether some of the buildings have been there about two hundred years and there is a lake on the top of the hill. all the 72 miles it was all hills about two or three times higer than Mount Remarkable my word some of the places where the train went it ran on the edge, if it ran of it it would go thousands of feet, you wouldn't believe it till you seen it the trains travel quicker than thoughts in Australia there were thirteen carriages and a brake van. We landed in Colombo one Tuesday and we are leaving on Friday when I come back I will tell all the news about Ceylon. I was only sea sick twice one day. I am alright now good has gold nothing to do and plenty of time to do it in, it will do me, we are all the time on the look out for thoughts tin fish that floats about in the sea, we train to get into our life belts get to our place in case of a miss hap. I think thats all the news this time more next time we are going to stop three more times on our travels that will be alright.

Close with love from

Norman"

The letter printed here is as it was written (mis-spellings etc). It had first been written in pencil and then over-

written in ink with a steel nib. On the title page he has written his name and address and added in pencil: -
"You want to save this book till I come home and I will show you all the places I was at take it over to Selt and show him and let him keep it for something to show. Papa"
Somasiri continues ".....I can visualize the young man of 1917 and picture him as of the same type as the many young men I met (as a child) during WW11. So I am glad he went back home safe, though it would appear he had better tales to tell, then, than of a train ride to Kandy."

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THE VOC VOYAGES

Dear Editor

I have read with interest several editions of the CEYLANKAN, and noted the frequent reference to the Dutch community in Ceylon and their part in the scheme of things helping transform the 'medieval' Ceylon kingdoms into the modern world. On reading various histories about the Island nowhere do we find particulars regarding the difficulties of the voyages of the ships travelling to Ceylon. A small dissertation to do with the colonising may be of interest to members of your Society, particularly with the arrival of the replica of the "*Batavia*" in Sydney as a feature for the Year 2000. The *Batavia* was of 650 tonnes before ballasting, and some 1,650 tonnes displacement, left Texel (Holland) 29-10-1628 and was wrecked on the Abrolhos Islands, Western Australia, 4-6-1629. She carried 300 crew and passengers bound for Batavia. Read Hugh Edwards: "Islands of Angry Ghosts", for the story of her misadventure. She really is worth visiting particularly as many of your Burgher members' ancestors would have gone out to Ceylon in similar vessels.

A little background might be appropriate here. After the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488 and Vasco de Gama reached India in 1498, the next step was to extend their territory and this included adding Ceylon to their occupied lands in 1505. The Portuguese crown then held a monopoly on Asian shipping. The Portuguese center of Government became Goa, on the west coast of India, the authority over all Portuguese ships and trading posts. The *Estado da India* - the body administering the crown monopoly, received its income in Asia principally from taxes and tolls and that by practicing the contract system in Europe, also there was no active trading by the Portuguese. Income was derived by selling the monopoly or route to Asia.

The Dutch and British, when they started their Asian ventures, regarded the costs of protecting the routes as part of the running costs - to be paid for out of profits. They were interested in active trading with the Asian countries.

The VOC (*Verenigde Nederlands Geoctrogeerde Oostindische Compagnie* - ie, *United Netherlands Chartered East India Company*) was formally organised on 20-3-1602 with the merging of 6 Companies to form the VOC, the first company owned by shareholders in the world, and the first truly International company. The company itself was partitioned into 6 Chambers: Amsterdam, Zeeland, Hoorn, Enthuizen, Delft and Rotterdam. Overall management was by a board of 17 directors - the *Heren Zeventien* (gentlemen seventeen). The most important right transferred by the States General (Central Government) was the sole right of the VOC to fit out ships for trade east of the Cape of Good Hope or through the Straits of Magellan. Obviously the government of the day did not consider Portugal had any monopoly on routes or destinations.

The VOC was authorised to behave as a "State outside the State" - it could make treaties with rulers and countries, build forts, recruit soldiers, etc, but in return the VOC had to swear an allegiance to the State (Netherlands) Government with ships returning from the East having to submit reports on conditions of routes travelled, and of the state of affairs in the countries visited overseas.

Various extensions to the original charter occurred about every 20 years, which may be influenced by trade itself, wars eg. the 2nd Anglo-Dutch War, 1660-1669, quarrels between shareholders and directors of the VOC - some problems when the VOC wished to pay the investors in trade goods principally instead of cash, eg mace, spices, even salt peter. The founding of the Batavian Republic in 1795 - the early Dutch East Indies - saw the beginning of the end of the VOC charter, finally demising in 1804.

By the mid 1600s, the shipyards of the 6 chambers were permanently at work. During the years 1600-1699, 706 ships were built at VOC shipyards. From 1700-1794, 755 were built. The tonnage of the ships was in 4 categories: 1...larger than 1000 tonnes, about 160 feet long; 2...800-1000 tonnes, about 145 feet; 3...500-800 tonnes, 130 feet; 4...less than 500 tonnes, 100-110 feet. There was a noticeable shift to larger ships in the 1700s. It is known that at least 1500 ships were built in VOC yards, almost 50% in Amsterdam, and 21% in the Zeeland

Chamber, the rest built by the other Chambers. Ships took about 10-12 months to build in Zeeland but up to 18 months in the smaller shipyards.

By 1608, Bantam, the western part of Java became the ultimate destination and the route there had to be established. At first after rounding the Cape, the VOC vessels would sail up the east coast of Africa occasionally attacking Portuguese settlements, but this became progressively more difficult as the Portuguese military strength in the region was strong. The commanders of the convoys had broad instructions as to the route they travelled.

In 1610 Hendrik Brouwer sailed to Bantam via the southern route, ie, sailing east from the Cape, ships could be taken to the East Indian archipelago by the south east trade winds. In 1616 this became the established route as it shortened the total journey considerably, meant travelling in a better climate, which resulted in better preservation of victuals, not to mention improved health for those on board. The southern track from the Cape to Batavia or Ceylon, etc, was also a considerably faster trip than the trip from Holland to the Cape.

Bantam was the major destination, but Ceylon, Bengal and Canton were other important trading ports and a few ships travelled directly to these places until 1629. After this date all vessels had to first travel to Batavia. By 1667 regular runs to Ceylon - initially to the Bay of Galle, which became a much used place of arrivals and departures, became the second most important VOC area in Asia. Ceylon also became a center for the trans-shipment of goods from Bengal, Coromandel and Surat. These goods were then shipped to Holland. Between 1660 and 1795, 271 trips were made from the Cape to Ceylon averaging 93 days, but the average time from the Netherlands to Ceylon was 252 days, which means the trip from Holland to the Cape averaged some 159 days. What people do not realise is that there were not many trips to the Island in any one year. In the 10 year period 1690-99, 34 ships made the trip, and in 1670-79, only 10 ships arrived, rarely any more than 5 ships in any one year. The arrival of a ship in Galle, or more rarely in the first many decades, Colombo, was a big event.

In the total existence of the VOC, and nearly 4800 outward voyages involving 1772 ships (some making 3,4 or even 5 voyages), less than 3% (141) came to an untimely end - by accident or enemy action. Probably no more than 4 ships were wrecked on the Australian west coast.

The long voyage to Ceylon etc, with the large VOC ships heavily manned with sailors, soldiers and other passengers, required victualling wherever possible. There were not many places besides the Cape of Good Hope; Cape Verde Islands, the Azores, St Helena, in the Atlantic, and Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, and these were often limited in their resources. The Cape was essential and as the years passed, the town of Table Bay, later Capetown, and False Bay developed. The stops here were often 2-4 weeks in duration to enable reprovisioning and for the exit of some of the sailors, soldiers or passengers. Some new people might also be taken on board. Seafarers, soldiers and craftsmen all contracted a tenure on leaving the Netherlands, which compelled them to stay in Asia for up to 5 years. They were then generally free to go their own way, though most probably settled where they had been working.

Of course food was a major concern on the long journey. With an average travelling time to the Ceylon of 252 days obviously fresh food (bread and vegetables) soon ran out after leaving the Netherlands and the principle dish at all 3 main meals soon consisted of dried or salted products only - ship's biscuits, groats, peas and beans, as well as meat, pork and dried fish, mostly prepared in water or fat. Fresh meat was served on special occasions as chickens, pigs and sheep were kept on board, and fish were caught along the way. Scurvy was the main problem and many deaths occurred from the diet although the VOC tried to improve nutrition on board by experimenting with the diet over the years. Typhus also took its toll, and probably the general state of filth contributed to deaths.

In the years 1690-1700, 43,000 voyagers travelled from the Netherlands and by the time Asia was reached some 6000 had died. In the years 1770-1780, 75,500 voyagers and some 18,800 died. The percentage of travellers dying on the homeward voyage was considerably lower than that of the outward trip. Between 1602 and 1795, of the approximately 367,000 people travelling to the Netherlands, 3354 are known to have died. The most common non-infectious diseases over the 2 centuries were, scurvy, beri-beri (both caused from vitamin deficiencies) and malaria. The latter was not confined to a tropical climate (it was even endemic in Australia in places like Melbourne, years ago), though the northern hemisphere variety was a much milder compared with its more violent and persistent tropical cousin.

Of course there were other ailments: respiratory problems, easily spread in the prevailing cramped quarters, stomach and bowel diseases probably caused by contaminated food, etc. Typhus, with its occasional savage outbreaks, could decimate travellers, as could typhoid.

The other real problem was the water supply. Each ship could carry enough for 4 months sailing, although the quality deteriorated with pollution and heat. The accommodation for officers and passengers was reasonably good, generally separate cabins, and of course the pick of the food, but the men on board, and there might be up to 300 on any one voyage, had a dreadful time. They had their hammocks hung right against each other in the orlop, the lowest deck of the ship which was about 4 feet high. The only space available in those cramped quarters was when the watch, which often included passengers as well as crew, having to stand occasionally at night. The smell must have been overpowering as often the basic hygiene essentials were not followed. Use your imagination for this.

There was much bickering between Batavia and Ceylon in respect of direct sailings from those two ports to the Republic. Ceylon was becoming a thorn in Batavia's side, the ruling directors there (the *Hoge Regering*), ultimately confining Ceylon to sending only one cargo ship a year back to the Netherlands.

During the nearly 200 hundred years of the VOC's trading, nearly 1,000,000 people travelled from Europe to Asia. During the same period over one third of a million people travelled back to Europe. Most of the difference in numbers was because many people stayed in the colonies preferring the lifestyle there and in all probability they had settled down to a new life with a local spouse. Remember, not many women were taken on these voyages. In the case of Ceylon, many of the Dutch male arrivals at first married into the local Portuguese Burgher families, then later, as their numbers increased, the Burgher community became a self perpetuating group containing mainly a mixture of Dutch, Portuguese, Sinhalese and Tamil, and of course a minority of many other races.

The percentage of ships that sailed and terminated in Ceylon was small compared with the numbers sailing to Batavia. During the 1600s it was about 7-8% on average, and during the next century it rose to perhaps 10-12%. Also many of the ships arriving in the East never returned to the Homeland, they were used on the intra-Asian trading routes.

The most important group of products taken to the East was textiles, particularly cloth of varying kind and quality, up to 37 different ones. Wine, beer and lead (the latter often used as ballast) were important exports too. Then there was some mercury, vermillion, amber, mirrors, etc. Naturally of course the big export from Ceylon was cinnamon.

This article about the shipping to the East, and Ceylon, is simply to explain the difficulties about the voyages. There is much more that could be written and a more specific article on the early Ceylon development of the VOC might be appropriate at a later date.

.....an old histerical(sic) seadog!! Keep up the good work and I hope this contribution will be good enough for your publication.

Ref: Dutch-Asiatic Shipping, 1979, Bruijn, Gaastra and Schoffer

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'MAARSKE' - THE HOUSE THAT LEEFE BUILT

The Rambler

Colombo's elite residential areas in the early nineteenth century were the Northern suburbs of Mutwal, Modera, Hulftsdorf and the Pettah. The stately homes of that era included "Whist Bungalow" at one time the residence of Sir Richard Morgan, "Elie House", the home of Charles Ambrose Lorenz, "Modera House", the home of John Armitage, "Cliff House", the home of George Wall, all located in the Mutwal area. In the Hulftsdorf area were "Udugaha Walawwa", the home of Sir Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, "Selby House", the home of Susew De Soysa, among other homes of prominent residents of that era. The shift from the North of Colombo to the South took place around the middle of the nineteenth century when crown and private land in the Cinnamon Gardens area was being purchased for house construction. The latter part of the nineteenth century saw many large homes constructed in this new 'suburb'. Many of these have been immortalised within the pages of the book, "*Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon*" published in 1907.

B.W. Leefe was a partner of Aitken Spence and Co. Having joined the company in 1897 as an Assistant, he was appointed a partner in 1913 and continued in that position until 1922. In 1920 he was also the Chairman of the Ceylon Chamber of Commerce and an influential person in the shipping and plantation dominated economy of the time. It was during this period that he decided to build his home at 47 Horton Place. He engaged William Claessen, the architect, to design the house which stood on over two acres of land. The pictures here show the house in the process of construction in 1919 and on completion in 1920. Leefe, a great believer in style and comfort, engaged the services of Count De Mauny who was then living in "Taprobane", the island home off the

coast of Weligama, to landscape the gardens of his new home which he named “Maarske”. Count De Mauny was a talented cabinet and furniture maker who trained young men in the Weligama area in furniture design and construction. He was also a creative landscape architect, developing a beautiful garden around his island home, Taprobane. A detailed description of the gardens were made in his book, “*The Gardens of Taprobane*”.

The picture here shows the neat and well laid out garden of “Maarske” during its hey day of the nineteen twenties. By the nineteen forties however, with the Leefes no longer in occupation, the stately home had to find another use. The Central Hospital of Colombo came to be established within this once palatial residence, and few years later the garden was subdivided, and a crop of residential flats were constructed on the once admired gardens. Visitors to the Central Hospital today may be quite unaware of the origins of this remarkable building.

The reference to “Twentieth Century Impressions of Ceylon”, about the subdivision in Cinnamon Gardens, reminded me of an article in “Inbetween People”, by Michael Roberts. It reads: “These holdings were augmented by the houses that were built on the Crown lands in Colombo, especially in the “Marandahn Cinnamon Gardens”, that were continuing (as of the 1830s) to be purchased till the 1870’s if not later. Our analysis of one list of such buyers shows that, between 1867 and 1873, 28 individuals whom we deemed Burgher, purchased 36 lots, virtually all over an acre in extent, adding up to 65 1/4 acres, for the total sum of Rs. 83,898.the principal Burgher buyers were: John Carl Fernando, A.O.Joseph, T.G.Morgan, E.H.Prins, J.W.Van Geyzel, F. Van Langenberg and Edward Weinman. We know too, that in 1868, C.A.Lorenz paid 2500pounds (Rs. 25,000) for “Elie House”, a prestigious bungalow in Mutwal previously occupied by Europeans. When he died in 1871, this property was valued at 5000 pounds and Lorenz owned 6 other houses in Colombo, valued at 7705 pounds, as well as 5 acres of land in Maradana, a small estate at Ragama and two estates of 100 acres each in Kalutara”....

I have in my possession a letter from my great Grandfather relating to the purchase of land in this area which reads as follows: “...here I purchased land in 1868 to build a home on. My father Johannes Daniel Prins urged me to call it “Haarlam” as that was where he said our forebears had come from in Holland.....” Actually that is probably incorrect as I believe the family came from Amsterdam.....Ed.

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GENEALOGY NOTES

We receive letters regularly requesting information on family histories and while the Ceylon Society is not primarily concerned with genealogy, it is part of history that certainly has relevance in our group. Recently while pursuing details about my own family’s (Prins) line, contact was made with a new member of our Society - Kyle Joustra. A few emails were exchanged, and some details, ‘trees’ of allied families, etc. Kyle had been researching the Barber line (who remembers Barber Chocolates?) and about 3 months ago had accumulated some 7000 names on his data base. He has expanded this to some 15,000 names (November) using a genealogy programme that is simply miraculous! This data base has enabled him to put together far more complete ‘family trees’ than ever before because of the ability to cross reference. For instance, on the ‘kinship’ details for myself, he has found some 2500 names at this stage, with many varied Burgher and some Sinhalese names. These reach out to the 7th cousin!! which, incidentally as it turns out, Kyle is to me! I believe if Alterndorf had had access to this sort of detail he would have punched out complete families histories in a matter of minutes!

Kyle welcomes family ‘trees’ being sent to him to add to his accumulation if members are interested. I would suggest however, that contact be made with him first as he may already have the details you wish included. For my own family tree, the extended knowledge has jumped an unbelievable amount, and the time saved in my own research immeasurable. This is not a commercial for Kyle as he is happy just doing this research, but everything costs today and remembering that fact is a good idea. I have found I have a kinship with several members of our Society which will probably surprise them when they find out!

Kyle’s address is: Kyle Joustra, PO Box 9200, Mid Camberwell, Victoria, 3124

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Kyle Joustra writes.....

In December last year I lost my Grandmother, her name was Agnes Mignon Crabtree (nee Barber) and I knew she grew up in Ceylon with her parents. This was about the total sum of what I knew of Ceylon apart from some colourful stories of the properties, animals and the mischief she and her sisters got up to and a few facts enshrouded

with questions. It was these questions that made me realise I should try to find more facts and information, so I may pass this onto my daughter and generations to come.

When I started searching for information about my family earlier this year I found I was getting much information on other families, Toussaint, Jonklaas and others related to mine, and in turn I would gather more information on the Barbers. My knowledge grew about Ceylon and about the wonderful period of time when my family lived there, and why they left, why the family lost a lot of property and various other historical facts. The most important realisation was the need to gather and coordinate this information to help others interested in their family history before the remembered links and the old letters, photos etc. were lost. I have found so many Sri Lankans, who have migrated to Australia, have material that should be recorded, and I suppose that in part what the Ceylon Society is all about, trying to record as much as possible.

Since my first piecing of information I now have approximately 15,000 names and growing, the names are linked where possible to information concerning Military service, occupations, immigration etc. My new aim is to help others where I can and link information or update as I go along. This is a time consuming process which means I may not have material someone is looking for now, but quite possibly it might turn up at a later date.

Without the warm and helpful nature of many people I have met over the last few months, the accumulation of the mountain of genealogy material so far would not have been possible. Examples of how this research can benefit: An enquiry from Beryl Bromley (who wrote in CEYLAN 8), elicited a response from my details that enabled her to locate key names in her genealogy, and: some one writing from Queensland now is in possession of 89!! pages of kinship for the name Toussaint!! each page has at least 50 names.

I am enriched and proud of the place my grandmother called Ceylon, and I believe the involvement with the CSA will further my research and benefit everyone interested in their family history.

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THE RISE AND FALL OF COFFEE.....

Everyone knows how the coffee industry in Ceylon was a very viable one until the plantations were struck with a deadly virus which in a few short years decimated the crops reducing the production of the beverage to the level of nonprofitability. The history of the development of coffee on the Island is interesting, particularly the rapidity and then the decline, and the initiatives taken to find a substitute crop.

The initial economy of the Island was transformed after the British won possession from the Dutch and security was assured after 1818. Europeans were then eligible for land grants of up to 4000 acres, and investment in agriculture commenced. Sugar, cotton, indigo, coconuts and cinnamon were grown but in time they all failed or produced a crop with a smaller rate of return than coffee.

Coffee plantation expansion was due to several factors: a reduction of import duties in England, and the twenty-fold increase in consumption there in only three decades; British colonies enjoyed preferential tariffs and could take advantage of this; investors in coffee in Ceylon found it easier to gain land grants and loans; the coffee estates were exempt from land tax and paid no export duty; and there was help from the state research station at the botanical gardens at Peradeniya.

By the 1830s the 3 major growing areas were, the Udugama Hills near Galle, the Dumbara valley and the Gampola and Peradeniya area. Time indicated the highlands to be the most productive, particularly after the Colombo-Kandy road was completed.

The Colebrooke-Cameron reforms helped private capitalist ventures and with the severe reductions in salaries and privileges of local civil servants these were keen to find other means for their financial advantage. The civil services reforms of 1844-45 ended direct involvement of civil servants in plantations, however, the relationship between the planters and the civil servants was sympathetic. Agency houses were established which helped with management problems, provided loans and finance to planters. Don't forget there was a time lapse of about one year from the picking of a coffee crop to its sale in London and money was needed to bridge that long period.

From 1833 outright land grants were replaced by a land sale policy, and available land was sold at auction for a minimum of five shillings per acre. There were some problems with this arrangement because the cost of land cultivation was considerable and the planters wanted well defined rights of ownership which could be difficult under the traditional Sinhalese land tenure system. A new Ordinance in 1840 helped resolve many problems and there was a sudden boom in land development for coffee crops.

Labour was a problem as picking the beans is a labour intensive task and the Kandyan, for the most part, were not interested in this arduous work as they had their own lands from which to gain a living. Anyway the pay for picking was poor though the Kandyans were happy to help clear land provided the incentives were adequate.

The picking season coincided with the slack time in the south India paddy fields, and so thousands of Indians began making the annual journey to central and southern regions of Sri Lanka, working for poor pay. They faced a high death rate from crossing the malarial dry zone but still came because of the appalling economic conditions in India.

The first coffee boom was 1839-46. By 1845 there were 25,000 acres under coffee. By 1848 there were over 50,000 acres. Transport charges had more than doubled since 1830, and with the fall in coffee prices in 1845, many planters faced financial difficulties. The recovery started in the 1850s. By 1860 acreage had doubled again. In 1871-2 it was 196,000 and rose to about 773,000 acres in 1878. In 1870 almost 50,000 tons of coffee were being exported a year.

Coffee's demise as the major crop in Ceylon was rapid due to a leaf fungus called *hemileia Vastatrix*. From 1869 it started spreading across the plantations, and by the late 1870s the average exports were over 20% lower than those of the 1860s. The industry rallied briefly because of the price of coffee rising from 54 pounds per ton in 1870 to 109 pounds per ton in the late 1870s. The spread of the disease forced the abandonment of many plantations, and by the 1890s, coffee had been reduced to a minor crop.

Coffee estates had promoted the building of roads - 2000 miles by 1863. A railway to Kandy completed in 1867, to Nawalapitiya by 1871. Colombo harbour facilities improved, including the commencing of the breakwater in 1875. Improved commercial arrangements were in train.

Cinchona and cocoa were grown as alternatives to coffee but they had problems economically and declined. Coconuts became another crop which expanded rapidly in the 1870s and continued to do so for many years though as an export crop it never reached the levels of coffee or, later, tea. Tea became the replacement crop of coffee and of course, the major export from Sri Lanka since the 1880s.

Ref: SRI LANKA - A History, by Chandra Richard de Silva, 1988

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GAJAMAN NONA AND JOHN D'OYLY

.....Senarath Panawatta, former Curator, Kandy National Museum.

Reading through 'Genealogy Exchange' in your journal "CEYLAN" issue of November, 1999 referring to the family of Gajaman Nona, I was prompted to write this note not only in the interest of the inquirer Mr. Samara Wickrama, but more specially for the readers, as the record requires revision.

Gajaman Nona was the celebrated 'Poetess Nightingale' (as she was popularly known) of Southern Sri Lanka and counterpart and contemporary of Balavattala Manike, the Kandyan poetess. She was born in 1758 at Kollupitiya in Colombo. Her full name is DONA ISABELLA PERUMAL CORNELIA and she was a renowned beauty. Her father was Virtamullagamage Don Franciscu Senaratna Kumarapperumal, born at Kahavatta near Beliatta in the Hambantota District, and he was the Secretary - the Liyana Appu of Ranavana Thennakone Mudalia, of Matara. Her mother was Baba Nona, one of the daughters of Jesentu Grero, the Keeper of the Land Register, the 'Thombu', of the famous Milagiriya Church at Bambalapitiya. Incidentally, this was a Buddhist temple originally, which was razed to the ground by the Portuguese and where, finally, the present church arose, upon an older, Reformed Church in 1903 - both in turn, replacing the Portuguese Church of 'Lady of Miracles'.

Gajaman Nona received her education at Kollupitiya and when her father was appointed to the dual posts of Gajaman Arachchi and Vidane Arachchi of Kahavatta, the family moved to Veragampita, Matara.

Around 1800, her father accidentally died from an attack by an elephant near the Giripaya Kasagala temple. She married Merenchi Gardies Arachchi of Talpe, Galle. He too faced a premature death, leaving a son Juvanis Alvis. Later, she married again Don Hendrick Sirivardhana Vijaya Malalasekara Muhandiram of Uyanvatta, Matara, by whom she bore three more sons, Girigoris, David and Don Dies/Baba Gurunanse. Unfortunately, the second husband also died prematurely. Now, left with four children and destitute, she lost all the social status she had enjoyed and was driven into poverty. This pitiful situation brought her down to such extent, that she addressed a

humble petition to John D'Oyly, the then Agent of the Government for Matara, with elegantly composed verses that would melt the heart of any one reading them.

D'Oyly, who was by that time a proficient student of Sinhalese, quite understood the contents of the verses, and feeling pity for her unexpected plight, donated to her an entire village for her maintainance. This village became famous as "NONA GAMA", the 'Village of the Lady'. To date, it goes by that name in the South and had become a part of the vocabulary of the Kataragama pilgrims as it is the junction from where they turn off to Kataragama.

I translate the relevant verses as follows

The children who were fed (to look) like the Moon
Today, there is no rice to (even) sustain them.
To him, the virtuous Provincial Agent D'Oyly,
Worshipping, I narrate my plight seeking redress.

Oh; Good Lord, if I receive as I desire
Some assistance that may give you merit;
(For) such charity that gives heavenly bliss
Pleased, even the gods will descend to express joyous gratitude.

Gajaman Nona rose to prominence as a poet at Veragamtota. Her tutors were the famous poet Pattayagama Lekam, who was her uncle and also the celebrated scholar monk Veragamtota Dharmarama, under whom she learnt, disguised as a male it is commonly believed. Despite two marriages, she still sustained such sublime youthful beauty that, enticed by these, she was once indirectly invited to the threshold of a third marriage by the poet Elapata Mudali who sent a verse to her. But, she flatly refused the proposal by a reciprocal stanza stating, that, after the death of her husbands, she is now quite used to a 'lonely bed' and had forgotten all about the sex she enjoyed so much.

Having lived for a full 56 years, this famed poetess of the South died on the 15th December, 1814 leaving an immortal landmark on the pages of Sri Lanka's glorious poetical heritage as the most versatile composer of erotic verses of the era.

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MOTORING IN SRI LANKA- THE EARLY YEARS

- *The Rambler*

The twentieth century is now a thing of the past. Many changes that came with it, however, will continue to influence our lives into the future. Foremost among the many technological changes that impacted on Sri Lanka, and the way of life of its peoples during the twentieth century, was the introduction of the motor car. Motoring not only revolutionised transport in Sri Lanka. It influenced the growth of the economy, changed existing social conditions, and closely linked the hitherto distinctly disparate urban and rural sectors of the country.

The first car to be imported into Sri Lanka was a 8 h.p. single cylinder steam driven Rover locomobile owned by Edgar Money in 1902, then a partner of Boustead Brothers of Colombo. Boustead Brothers introduced electricity to the island and owned the Colombo Electric Tramways and Lighting Company which was formed in 1902. The Company was thus involved in more than one way in pioneering changes to transport on the island. Mr Money's Rover took three days to get to Nuwara Eliya. In those days 25 miles per hour was considered extremely fast! It failed at its first attempt to scale the Ramboda pass, Money having to spend the night at Ramboda.

The first petrol driven motor car was a 5 h.p. Oldsmobile imported by G.C. Gnapp in 1904. The photograph shows Gnapp at the wheel of the car. Seated behind him is O. John also a motor enthusiast of the time. This car was later purchased by E.L.F. de Soysa who with N.D.B. Silva were the only Ceylonese owners of motor cars in 1904. In that year there were 4 Locomobiles (owned by Cockerill, Rawlinson, Skelton, and H.A.Dixon), 2 Turner-Mierse cars (owned by E.G. Beilby and Harry Storey), 1 Wolseley (Lieut Skelton), 3 Humber Voiturettes (owned by R.J. Farquharson, E. Hamilton and Boustead Brothers), 1 Weston Steam Company Car (E.G. Money) and 9 Oldsmobiles (E.L.F. De Soysa, E. Skinner, D.R., Marshall, N.D.B. Silva, E.J. Hayward, R.J. Farquharson, G.C.

Gnapp, and two others).

The interest in motoring grew rapidly, and in March 1905 the Automobile Club of Ceylon was launched with Harold North its first Honorary Secretary. The Club held its first meet that year with four cars competing! The competitors were E.J. Hayward, G.C.Gnapp, Rev Stanley Bishop, and A.T. Shank.

During the nineteen twenties, thirties, and forties the motor car became a popular privately owned form of transport thanks to the Austins, Fords, Morris, and Standard cars that were imported in large numbers during that period. The importers of motor cars and reputed garages of the time were Walkers, Brown and Co, Eastern Motor Garage, Edema, Rowlands, Lover Bros (Agents for Minerva), Armstrongs, C.M. Wright and Co (Agents for Studebaker and Renault), Ceylon Automobile Engineering Works, Ceylon Motor Supply and Agency Ltd (Agents for Wolseley), Ch Bohringer (Agent for Adler), Colonial Motors, and Imperial Motor Works. Most of these companies were on Steuart Place and the Galle Face area, as well as in Union Place.

The picture here taken in 1911 is the showroom of the Ceylon Motor Supply and Agency Co which was located opposite the Galle Face Hotel. The Galle Face Court built in 1922 came up on the site of this building. Many of the other motor showrooms such as Lover Bros, Edemas, and the Ceylon Automobile and Engineering works were on the stretch of Galle Road extending from Kollupitiya Junction up to Galle Face Hotel. Many later translocated to the Union Place.

The nineteen fifties, in the aftermath of the Korean rubber boom, was the golden age of motoring in Ceylon. Owners changed models each year, and car salesmen were enjoying lucrative incomes. At the lower end of the market were the ubiquitous Morris Minors and Austin A 40s and at the top end were the Cadillacs and Buicks then imported by Tuckers Autodrome. There were about half a dozen Cadillac convertibles imported during this period including the two owned by the brothers R.G. and Upali Senanayake bearing numbers EY 2889 and EY 1753. Tuckers Autodrome organised promotional 'Motoramas' at which well known models posed beside cars. Our picture from 1955 shows Gunilla Buxton, Eva Wanigasekera, and Rita Fernando by a Cadillac Sedan EL 1771. Onally Gulamhussein owned a maroon Buick convertible EL 1555, and Geoffrey Bawa the Rolls Royce which he still retains. The only Benz convertible was imported by Earle Arnolda and later owned by Ray de Costa. Soon after his electoral defeat in 1956, Sir John Kotelawala imported a Cadillac Sedan to which was assigned the first of the new system of number plate registration with the Sinhalese symbol 'SRI'. Sir John's car with its number 1 Sri 1 did not however signal a new era of motoring, as import restrictions which followed two years later saw a significant contraction of growth of the national fleet.

With the liberalisation of imports in 1977 the automotive sector in Sri Lanka experienced a radical change. The intervening years had seen the appearance of a new international economic order with the gradual deposition of Britain and the U.S.A. as leaders of the global automotive market, being replaced by Japan, Germany and France. Sri Lanka's automotive sector which had not felt the emerging global changes due to its economic isolation through self imposed trade barriers, quickly adjusted to the new scenario. New entrepreneurs entered the automotive sector taking control of its commanding heights, replacing older firms whose links were to trading partners that were less relevant in the contemporary global economy. In the nineteen fifties with no import restrictions, Sri Lanka was importing around 10,000 motor cars each year. With an expanded economy and a larger base of consumers it is possible that today's level of annual importation of motor cars is higher, despite restrictions that are still applicable.

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MORE ON THE CHINESE CONNECTION..... In the 3rd and 4th editions of the CEYLANKAN, were two short articles referring to the Chinese connection with Ceylon. The book *"When China Ruled the Seas"*, by Louise Levathes, gives a more detailed account of these 15th century incursions to the Island.

A small correction to the first article is: the king of Kotte was captured and taken to China with his relatives, not the king of Kandy. The story is interesting as the Chinese connection lasted for many years. Apparently Admiral Zheng He (or Ho) when on his way to India and beyond with his treasure fleet, had landed in Ceylon at a time when the Island was divided into 3 warring states instead of their usual unified one. The principal Sinhalese authorities in the center of the island were fighting both the Hindu Tamils in the north, and a Muslim usurper, who was trying to make Islam the state religion. Nissanka Alagakkonara (or Alakeswara), a local chief, having rebuffed

a large Tamil invasion, now desired to seize power from the legitimate Sinhalese ruler in Kotte. The times were troubled in Ceylon, the Sinhalese mistrustful of each other and of foreigners. Greeks, Romans, Persians, Jews and Arabs had all come to their shores wanting something. There were constant battles with the Tamils from southern India who periodically controlled the island, and to survive in their own land the Sinhalese were forced to become masters of guerilla warfare and deceit, and sometimes they turned their special skills on each other.

It was Alakeswara, the hero in the wars against the Tamils, and not the legitimate rulers of the capital cities of Gampola and Kotte, who met Zheng He upon his arrival in Ceylon. Alakeswara refused to pay tribute to the Chinese emperor or to erect the tablet, which he believed to be some form of Chinese sovereignty. He beat the Chinese in a brief skirmish and drove them back to their ships.

The Chinese sailed on to Quilon, Cochin and Calicut, completed their trading and returned to Ceylon to avenge the ingratitude and disrespect to the dragon throne. The subsequent events have two different versions: according to the *Ming shi lu*, the veritable record of the period, Alakeswara demanded gold, silver and precious things from Zheng He. When this was refused Alakeswara ordered 50,000 troops to seize the treasure fleet. The soldiers cut down trees to block Zheng He's way back to the coast.

When the Admiral discovered this, he reasoned that there would be few defending the capital. So he marshalled his forces, about 2000, and easily seized Alakeswara, then fending off the Sinhalese army, escaped back to his ships with Alakeswara as prisoner.

Back in Nanjing, the emperor and his court officials decided to pardon the 'king' for his ignorance and ordered 'one of his wise followers' to rule in his place. It is unclear as to the identity of the king or the wise follower. The Ming sources at the time seem confused about the local power structure.

The bravery of Zheng He and his men is celebrated in verse, the victory considered the most glorious moment in the history of the voyages, where "one fought against a hundred" and the spirit of Zheng He's men was "unbreakable".

Straight away, their dens and hideouts we ravaged,
And made captive that entire country,
Bringing back to our august capital,
Their women, children, families and retainers, leaving not one,
Cleaning out in a single sweep those noxious pests, as if winnowing chaff from grain....
These insignificant worms, deserving to die ten thousand times over, trembling in fear..
Did not even merit the punishment of Heaven.
Thus the august emperor spared their lives,
And they humbly kowtowed, making crude sounds and
Praising the sage-like virtue of the imperial Ming ruler.

Sinhalese histories tell quite a different story:

Alakeswara, they say, saw the return of the angry Chinese as a way of disposing of his adversary, Vijaya Bahu VI, and seizing the throne of Kotte himself. He supposedly did a deal with Zheng He, lulling the king into receiving the gift-bearing Chinese envoys to the palace, where upon the king and several of his nobles and chiefs were seized.

Both authorities agree that the emperor returned the king to Ceylon, but on his return he was secretly murdered by Alakeswara. Vijaya's wife and young son escaped Kotte and were hidden for three years. In the meantime Buddhist priests, loyal to the royal family, insisted on Alakeswara rebuilding the capital before he could be crowned king. He did this, adding new buildings and baths to Kotte and widening the city's streets.

In the spring of 1415, as Alakeswara was to be crowned, the 16 year old son of Vijaya Bahu VI took the state sword which was meant to have anointed the usurper, and killed him. The prince became the new king, Sri Parakrama Bahu VI.

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(By: Vama Vamadevan)

Wilhelm Geiger was born on 21st July 1856, the fourth child of the evangelical Lutheran Pastor Johannes Leonhard Geiger and his wife Emma. After matriculating in Philology, (the science of languages) he made an attempt to study Theology in deference to his father's wishes. Though he gave up both as his final goal, the initial grounding in both these disciplines stood him in good stead. This academic background helped him in his final achievements and contributions to the study of Pali, Buddhism and his *magnus opus* the translation and editing of the Mahawamsa.

His initial foray into Oriental studies included the study of Indian and Iranian society. In one of his writings in *Aus meinem leben (manuscript) Vol: 1 P123*, he says this about his study of Sanskrit, "...I always dreamed of strange people and far-away lands: now they have been brought closer to me and I longed to delve deeper into their language and culture". In his age and time in Europe, an Orientalist had little chance of following his profession outside the portals of a University. It was a risky career.

Wilhelm Geiger's mentor and tutor was von Spiegel who gave an impetus to the study of Pali in Europe. He edited and translated the Pali Tripitaka, the sacred texts of the Buddhists, and it contained the text and translation of a famous Sinhalese collection of Buddhist tales (*Uragassutta*) dating from the 1st. Century. Geiger, followed his master's footsteps and immersed himself in the study of Oriental languages. On the 21st of December 1876, at the young age of 20, his thesis was accepted and he graduated Doctor of Philosophy. Five years later in 1881 he married Marie and in the fullness of time they had five children.

In 1886 Geiger undertook three journeys which turned his academic career and outlook. After these travels he took up an appointment in 1891 to the Chair of Indo-European Comparative Philology, which was the most momentous decision of his life. He forsook his interest in a wide range of subjects and focussed on research into Buddhism and the Sinhalese language and culture.

Geiger's visits to Ceylon coincided with the Buddhist revival heralded by Anagarika Dharmapala in 1890. Geiger met many of the leading Buddhist Monks of the time for whom he had a high regard as seen from his writings and letters. Among them were Ven. Waskaduwe Sri Subuthi Nayake Thera, Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala and Ratmalane Dharmaratna.

Apart from those mentioned earlier he had many friends in Ceylon with whom he was in constant correspondence and contact. To mention a few, one was Mudliar A. Mendis Gunasekera and another Mudliar Simon de Silva. Through his visits to Ceylon and his contacts with friends and eminent scholars of the time, he began to interest himself, then study, and ultimately master the chronicles in Ceylon. Having done so he credited Ceylon as one of the few and rare countries to have what he called historic literature. The Mahawamsa and Dipawamsa, he said, gave a rare insight into the political and cultural history of the island from very early times.

The first attempt to translate the Mahawamsa was made by Alexander Johnstone (1776 -1834) through an Indologist of the time in France. This project came to nothing, but Edward Upham edited an English translation that was published in 1829, also at the request of Alexander Johnstone. This edition, in three volumes called the '*Saved Books of the Past*', had many shortcomings and was considered unreliable. George Turner, (1799 - 1843) (incidentally, it will be of interest that he was an Englishman born in Jaffna), published a well received translation published in 1837. Batuwanthudawe in 1877 had a hand in editing some parts which was translated by L.C.Wijeyasinghe in 1889. Hermann Oldenberg in 1879 first edited the Dipawamsa and this received high acclaim.

The first work of Geiger, 'The Dipawamsa & Mahawamsa & their Historical Development in Ceylon', was translated by Ethel Coomaraswamy, wife of Ananda Coomaraswamy, and this was printed in Colombo in 1908.

There have been several editions of the Mahawamsa, but Geiger's version stands out as a scientific edition because it is a good critical edition of the text. He took 3 years to complete his work on the Mahawamsa, in spite of collecting 10 versions of the text -six in Sinhala, 2 in Burmese and 2 in Cambodian script. Geiger's rendition of the Mahawamsa won universal acclaim throughout the world of letters.

In his own words ~ 'There is hardly a corner of the Indian Sub Continent of whose history we know so much as we do of that of the Island of Ceylon. The main sources are the two Chronicles in Pali verse, the *Dipawamsa* and the *Mahawamsa*, the former written in the fourth, and the latter towards the end of the fifth century....'.

Soon after the German version was translated to English in 1912, Geiger's academic life drew to a close. His wife Marie Geiger died in 1910 and Geiger faded away from the limelight.

Reference: 1. *Wilhelm Geiger... His Life and Works*, ..by Heinz Bechert (1977)

2. *Prof K.M. de Silva: Timely Publication to Commemorate Geiger's first visit to Lanka* (Sunday Observer 3.9.95)

Closer to the time of the Russian Revolution, Geiger was *persona non grata* in Czarist Russia for his liberal views. However, his name as an Orientalist had already cut a *niche* for him in the academic world. Neither in Czarist Russia, nor in Post-Revolutionary Russia could they deny him high office in the academy of Sciences, and he was a guest speaker in all prestigious fora.

In 1908 Geiger met Eduard Mueller, Professor of Indian Studies in Berne. Mueller had the distinction of having deciphered Sinhalese inscriptions and had been summoned to Ceylon in 1878 to complete the work begun by Paul Goldschmidt, who had died an untimely death in 1877 of malaria. Goldschmidt was Archaeological Commissioner in Ceylon when he died. Mueller is the author of the monumental book *Ancient Inscriptions of Ceylon* (1883), thereby laying bare the epigraphical wealth buried in the jungles of Ceylon.

By this time Geiger was immersed in the study of Buddhism and Ceylon. His interest in Buddhism and Ceylon stands out in bold relief from his contemporaries and predecessors. His interest was not merely factual and academic but one inherently filled with personal feelings and passion. This was enhanced by his visit to Ceylon and personal contact with the people. Geiger visited Ceylon on three occasions - 1895, 1925/6 and in 1931.

In 1892/3 he had a student in Erlangen in Germany, Don Martino de Zilva Wickremasinghe, a Sinhala scholar and linguist in his own right. Wickremasinghe, is credited with the founding of the *Epigraphia Zeylanica* in 1904. His works include the *Catalogue of Sinhalese Manuscripts in the British Museum* (1900) and several other works. He was a linguist *par excellence*, and was lecturer in Tamil and Telugu in the University of Oxford, London and in Pali and Parakrit for Jesus College, Oxford. Among other works he has written *Tamil self-taught* and *Tamil Grammar self-taught*. Senarath Paranavitharana his successor as Epigraphist to the Ceylon Government says of Wickremasinghe '... he has never been accorded his rightful recognition'. It was Wickremasinghe who introduced Geiger to the Sinhala language and kindled in him a desire to travel to Ceylon, which he finally undertook.

Geiger drew up a program to achieve the following objectives during his visit to Ceylon. Firstly, to achieve a vivacity and clarity of his perception of the island essential to the historian to arrive at an accurate judgement of the life and customs of the people. Secondly, to gain a thorough and specialist knowledge of the Sinhala language and literature.

Geiger arrived in Colombo on December 6, 1895 and lodged at the bungalow of the German Merchant Boehringer Lichtenstein in Colpetty. He soon started his itinerary, visiting Ratnapura, Kurunagalle, Kandy and Anuradhapura. On the way to Anuradhapura he visited Aluvihare where in the First Century BC the sacred Buddhist Scriptures in Pali were first written. From Anuradhapura he visited Mihintale and returned to Colombo. He returned from Ceylon after his first visit in April 1896.

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LANKA IN VERSE....

.....sent in by Vama Vamadevan

Dr. R.L.Spittel, a great savant who dedicated his life to explore the heritage of Ceylon, worked tirelessly for the upliftment of the Veddas, wild life protection and the environment. His poem 'Hail Lanka', showing his love of the country, appeared in an earlier CEYLANKAN. In this issue we reproduce a poem that shows his love of wild life.

ELEPHANTS ON THE MAHAWELI

Where are the homes the elephant haunts?

They are there in the lonely places
Where the hand of nature boldly flaunts
Her strength and majestic graces.

How are the waters in which he laves,
Are they broad and fast and strong?
Yes, and quiet as silent graves,
They sing no rippling song.

And what are the trees? Strange hunter, say.
They are gaunt and grand and tall,
And wistfully still as a bye-gone day,
With heaven covering all.

And of the elephant, what of him?
He roams where he will and when,
And feeds in those fragrant forests grim,
Far from the ways of men.

Though wrought of mighty thew and bone,
Soft is his tread and slow
In swamp and arbour, far and lone
Where the languid breezes blow.

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TWO HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE SRI LANKAN ARMY

1. The Military History of Ceylon: an outline by Anton Muttukumaru (Randhara Books)
227pp, Sri Lanka Rupees 5251/=, ISBN 81 7013 046 8.
2. Sri Lanka Army: 50 Years On 1949-1999. Published by the Sri Lanka Army
932pp, ISBN 955-8089-02-8

The role of the Military in the post-colonial phase of emerging nations in formulating the structure of these nations of South East Asia and Africa, is widely recognised. Particularly in Sri Lanka in the context of recent political upheavals, it is pertinent to focus on the role of the Sri Lankan army. Both these publications fulfill the task of delineating this role and as such will be a valuable source of information for future historians of this troubled period in the history of the island.

The first book is an ambitious attempt to draw the broad sweep of over two thousand five hundred years of history into a concise and meaningful outline. Muttukumaru succeeds in producing a well researched, well-presented record with relevant references to original sources of Sri Lankan history such as the Mahavamsa to back up his propositions. In doing so he reveals the sharp eye of a historian combined with a sound understanding of military strategy, a person eminently worthy of being selected the first Commander of the Army of independent Ceylon. The historical record provides an excellent backdrop to the story of a newly created Army of a fledgling nation. It is succinct and concise skillfully drawing together the many and varied threads of military tradition to form a coherent tapestry. The strands of military tradition in ancient Sri Lanka are clearly delineated and salient events given a balanced and dispassionate interpretation. For example defense planning and military strategy during Dutugemunu's campaign against Elara, the weapons used and details of the actual campaign, are well narrated and makes for interesting reading. Other bits of interesting information include apt quotes from various sources. For example he quotes from Geiger's "Army and War in Medieval Ceylon"....."the Sinhalese were not a warlike

people..... unable to adapt to military discipline”... He goes on to quote from the Mahavamsa which gives instances of soldiers running away when exposed to unexpected danger... shades of modern tales of desertion from the ranks of the Sri Lankan Army!

Muttukumaru's understanding of the role of the army in the national scheme of things is clearly set out and events relating to the establishment of the Army set out in a concise fashion. However, in the last couple of chapters there is a sort of chronological drift evidenced by the lack of important dates linked to momentous events. This leaves a lacuna in an otherwise well written book. His reflections on the ethnic conflict are thoughtful and well considered. On reading the second book I was disappointed that his hope that someone would “pick up the threads and weave a continuation of this story” were not fully fulfilled.

It is a great pity that the poor quality of print detracts from the quality of the text. This excellent publication could have been greatly enhanced by the reproduction of quality photographs and maps.

Anniversaries are times for reflection, assessment and evaluation of events associated with a national institution. In historical terms particularly in the case of a country with a long recorded history such as Sri Lanka, fifty years is a mere blink of the eye. Conventional wisdom dictates that in the writing of history of a country or an institution or even the place of key personalities within those entities, a reasonable time lag ensures proper evaluation and a dispassionate approach.

However in the context of the sociological, cultural and political upheavals taking place in Sri Lanka at the end of the twentieth century, those involved would have felt the need and urgency to compile the history of the Army which was established in 1949. It is a momentous task as it is important to garner the living memories as well as perspectives of those who contributed to its establishment and development. So the committee who devoted their time and attention and the dedication with which they undertook the task should be complimented on the production of this unnecessarily bulky but handsome tome. Unfortunately any attempt to write the history of an institution by those emotionally linked to its establishment and development, with a readership equally involved with its evolution can lend itself to egocentricity and an element of bias. The discerning eye and ruthless pen of an impartial, efficient editor could have greatly reduced the excessive bulk as well as enhanced the quality of the publication. So what we have now is more a memoir or even a linear narrative rather than a history.

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In the second book, copious reproductions of sources other than Army documents does not fit smoothly with the flow of the text as it does in the earlier military history. For example on Page 208 extensive reproduction of sections of Rohan Gunaratne's book, “A Lost Revolution”, to explain the birth of the Janath Vimukthi Peramuna is a case in point. A summary of the salient points including the impact of the insurrection on the Army and the role of the Army in quelling it, would have sufficed. While most of the other quotes are relevant, carefully selected quotes germane to the history of the Army would have helped to cut down the number of pages.

The extensive pictorial record containing no doubt most of the photographs in existence today, add to the bulk of the publication. These photographs belong in the Army Archives as a valuable record to be safeguarded for posterity. A judicious selection of relevant, significant photographs arranged chronologically would no doubt have enhanced the quality of the publication.

Sri Lanka Army - Fifty Years On, is more a memoir than a history. The stories told are interesting, given the immediacy of these stories. But the capacity to step back and see events in the context of national development is not present. It has great relevance for “the personalities involved in the build-up of the national Army after Independence” as stated on the dust cover. It will indeed be a useful document as it has garnered together many original documents and reminiscences of living persons, for later historians who will undertake the task of defining the role of the Army in post-colonial Sri Lanka.

The following article is extracted from “**Recollections**”, by Sir Gerard Wijeyekoon and refers to the author's association with the famous advocate at the turn of the century.

FREDERICK DORNHORST....revisited...

When I was admitted an Advocate of the Ceylon Bar in February 1902, I was sworn in before Sir John Winfield Bonser, Chief Justice. Sir Winfield was a stern Judge, and Counsel had to be very careful, especially about the facts of his case, when appearing before him. Fortunately for me, I was introduced to him as a model young man by Sir P.

Ramanathan at his house "Sukhastan". Sir Ponnambalam was celebrating "Thai Pongal" in January 1902, and he had invited the members of the Bar, including the Judges, for an evening party. Sir Winfield Bonser was present at this function. Sir Ponnambalam took me up to Sir Winfield Bonser, and introduced me to him as the youngest Barrister who was to be sworn in, as an Advocate, in about two or three weeks time. Sir Winfield Bonser asked me many questions about my career in England, and the Inns of Court, and where I proposed to practise. This conversation brought me into close contact with him, and thereafter, I was not in such a great fear, when I was sworn before him as an Advocate, nor when I had to appear before him in cases.

At the time, there were only twenty two Advocates practising in Colombo. The Law Library was a narrow room next to the Chief Justice's court, and the twenty two Advocates knew each other very intimately, and were a happy family. Frederick Dornhorst was, without question, the acknowledged leader of the Unofficial Bar, and I must candidly say that I have not yet met or heard his equal. He had an intensive force of personality, a voluble gift of speech and a great power of sarcasm. He was what I may term, an all round Advocate. He had the bulk of the work in the Appeal Courts. He appeared in nearly all the big cases in the District Court, and defended all well known accused at the Criminal Assizes. Outside Hulftsdorp, it was a treat to hear him speak, at Prize givings, especially at the Royal College, where he was a teacher before he became an Advocate. On public platforms, especially, when Government had to be criticised, with regard to matters of public interest, and at after dinner speeches, it was difficult to find his equal. He was highly respected by the members of both professions of the Bar, and in the Law Library, he was called LOKKA (Great Man). There was a good deal of competition to secure his services in the Appeal Courts. In fact, he was on one side or the other, in almost every important appeal case. He possessed the confidence of every Judge before whom he appeared. He never accepted a post under Government, although a seat on the Supreme Court Bench, was offered to him several times as well as the Attorney-Generalship. I happened to be by him in the Law Library, when Hermann Loos, who was then Office Assistant to the Attorney-General, and the most influential officer in that Department, came up to Dornhorst, and wanted to know whether he would accept the Attorney-Generalship, if offered to him, as the then Attorney-General, Sir Charles Layard, was to be promoted Chief Justice. He refused to accept the appointment, remarking, in his characteristic manner, that there was no place like the Law Library for him, where he could crack a joke at any time, hear all the gossip in Colombo, and smoke a good cigar. He was so influential with the Government, that he was always consulted when vacancies occurred on the Supreme Court, or District Court Bench, and his nominee was invariably appointed.

Court fees were small at the time. It was between two and five guineas for an appeal. One of the big fees that Dornhorst got, I know, was in the Batticaloa Kaladdi Will case. He was paid 300 guineas to go to Batticaloa, and this was then considered a very big fee. Walter Pereira who was also then considered a great Civil Lawyer, having heard that Frederick Dornhorst was paid 300 guineas, demanded the same fee from the other side and got it. I was in the Law Library when Walter Pereira claimed the same fee.

Frederick Dornhorst was at his best, when he defended any well known and respectable person who was accused in a criminal case. I heard him when he appeared to defend three or four respectable people in the Assize Court. I should not like to mention their names. One was a Proctor charged with abetting murder, and another with kidnapping and abduction. Both were bad cases for the accused, but Frederick Dornhorst by his powerful advocacy secured "not guilty" verdicts.

In the last sensational criminal case in which he appeared for the accused, I prosecuted. This was in 1905. He defended an Annavee of a Roman Catholic Church in the Chilaw District who was charged with kidnapping, abduction, and unlawful assembly, before the Assize Court in Chilaw. H. J. C. Pereira defended the second accused, Brooke Elliott the third accused and Gladwin Koch the fourth and fifth accused. I was prosecuting with W. F. H. de Saram who was then practising as a Proctor in Negombo. As the fate of the first accused depended entirely on the case against the second accused, Dornhorst wanted H. J. C. Pereira to do all the cross-examining, and put up a stout fight for his accused. He also referred to H. J. C. Pereira as an old Bailey Advocate. The case lasted seven days. Mr. Justice Joseph Grenier heard the case. He summed up for a conviction. The Jury by six to one acquitted all the accused. It was certainly a perverse verdict. The Judge was dissatisfied with the verdict, and he told the accused, "The Jury have acquitted you, and you can go to your respective homes." I was also taken aback at this verdict. Returning to the Resthouse from the Courts, I walked with the Foreman of the Jury who was also staying at the Resthouse. I thought he was the one man who, was for a conviction, but when I asked him how the Jury came to return such a perverse verdict, his reply was, "How can we convict when Dornhorst appears?"

Frederick Dornhorst was a great reader all his life, and very fond of good literature. He never had a note when he addressed a Jury, or made a public speech. He was certainly endowed with courage, eloquence, and remarkable clarity of vision. When I was a Law Student in England, he was called to the English Bar in 1899. He made a speech at the Ceylon Students Dinner in London, held in December 1900, and referred to his becoming ambitious in his old age, to advance himself a little in his professional life by becoming a Barrister. He hoped that, when he got back to Ceylon, this would bring him more briefs and more fees. He was a very great friend of Corbet who was then practising as a Barrister in London. In any case before the Privy Council, in which Corbet appeared, he used to retain Frederick Dornhorst, if he happened to be in England. In one case I know Corbet not only retained Frederick Dornhorst, but also Bray, Q.C. a Senior Counsel at the English Bar. When the case was taken up in the Privy Council, Bray opened the case and told the Judges that Dornhorst would follow him and discuss, in particular, the law appertaining to the case. Dornhorst did so, and after the case was over, Bray turned round to Corbet, and asked him, why he retained him, when he had already such an eminent Lawyer as Dornhorst.

Frederick Dornhorst always stayed in London in a guest house in Bedford Place. This was his favourite place of residence, and he could never make up his mind to go to any other place. I had to pass his house almost three or four times a week, on my way to lectures at the Inns of Court. Dornhorst could see me from his window, and used to tell me that I was a model student in attending lectures so frequently. I know he held me up as a model young man, and asked his son Rick to copy my example, where attendance at lectures was concerned. Rick was naturally brilliant, and might have attained his father's position at the Bar, if he had been studious and persevering, but, unfortunately, he was the opposite, and after a couple of years in Ceylon, he returned to England, and never continued his career as a Barrister.

Frederick Dornhorst was fond of walking, and, in Ceylon, his one recreation was a visit to the Orient Club, almost every evening. He was the life and soul of the Club, and he had a few particular friends with whom he regularly played Bridge every evening.

Those who were associated with him at the Bar could never forget him. He had both an attractive and commanding personality. He retired from the Bar, at the age of 53, and settled down in England with his family. He visited Ceylon, once or twice, and whenever I went on a holiday to England, one of the first persons I visited was Frederick Dornhorst. He was anxious to meet someone from Ceylon who would give him news especially of Hulftsdorp. When I asked him to buy or rent a house in the country, and live in more comfortable surroundings, he always told me that he could not afford it, as he had retired from the Bar so early in life, and was forced to live on his capital, and support his children's families and his poor relations. There was certainly a good deal of truth in his assertion.

When he came to Ceylon on his last trip, he stayed at Calverley House". One morning, when I was taking my usual walk and passing "Calverley House", I noticed him on his lounge in the verandah outside his office. He saw me and shouted out to me to come. I went in. As I was going up the steps, I passed the postman who had given him his letters. Dornhorst was looking at a small book, and when I approached him he told me that he was studying his poverty. This was his bank pass-book. He put it aside, and told me that when he got back to England, he would have to live more carefully, as his money was vanishing quickly. I believed him.

When I went to London, in 1930, on a holiday I was very anxious to meet Dornhorst, and find out how he was getting on. The day after arrived I got a phone message informing me that Dornhorst had died, and that his funeral would take place, on the following Friday, at Golder's Green. I was shocked to hear the news. I attended his funeral, and besides his relations the only outsiders were the late Philip Ondaatjie, Advocate, and myself. His remains were cremated, and Philip Ondaatjie and I were asked by the authorities to look at the coffin after the outside cover was removed, and before it went into the crematorium. A few months later, application was made to the District Court of Colombo by his Executors for sole Testamentary Jurisdiction. His estate was declared, I believe, at 15.75* lacs, and in spite of his being possessed of so much wealth, he always impressed upon his family and friends the fact that he was a poor man.

*1 lac==approx. 100,000pounds

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Hugh

There are only 24 pages here. (I've just added the Dornhorst notes). It is fairly tightly written and with a few perhaps larger pictures should expand to 26 or 28 pages. You may have some other things to include - the disclaimer at the end for one thing. How about subs and office bearers addresses etc in each edition. The article about RK de Silva needs expanding on page 7. I don't care what order things are placed nor if you decide some of the material would be better outed, though I think it is all ok

Page	1...Editorial
	..Gift of Today
	2...A Tablet by Sophia Marshall, Somasiri Devendra
	4...Tea snippet, and tea quotes
	5...Misquotes, useless information, and quote
	...Long White Clouded Vision
	6...Did you Know
	7...Special meeting....RK de Silva
	...Letters
	9...VOC Voyages
	11.'Maarske' - the house that Leefe Built...the Rambler
	12.Genealogy Notes...Kyle Joustra
	13.The rise and fall of Coffee
	14.Gajaman Nona and John D'Oyly...Senarath Panawatta
	15.Motoring in Sri Lanka - the early years...the Rambler
	16.The Chinese Connection Again
	18.Wilhelm Geiger...Vama
	19.Lanka in Verse..Vama
	20.Two Historical Perspectives of the S/L Army...Vama
	22.Frederick Dornhorst revisited