

Keeping Our Heritage Alive
CSA

The Ceylanikaum

The Journal of the Ceylon Society of Australia



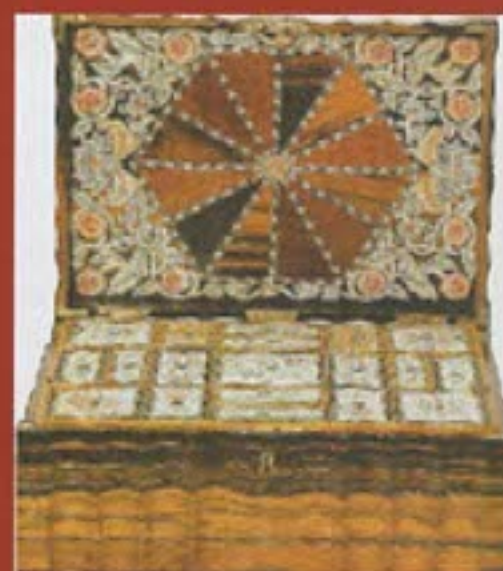
• King Vimala Dharmasuriya II's Regalia



• A tilt- down Ceylon Breakfast Table of specimen woods with ebony pedestal



• 19th Century Carved Ebony Sofa from Ceylon



• Calamander/ivory work box

*The Magic of Antique
Euro-Sinhalese Furniture*

by Hugh Karunanayake



The Ceylon Society of Australia

PRESIDENT

Pauline Gunewardene
Mobile + 61 419 447 665
paulineg@ozemail.com.au

VICE-PRESIDENT

Dr Srilal Fernando

SECRETARY

Sunimal Fernando
smfernando@optusnet.com.au
Int. 61 2 9476 6852 Mobile +61 404 462 412

TREASURER & PUBLIC OFFICER

Deepak Pritamdas
Mobile + 61 434 860 188
PO Box 489 Blacktown NSW 2148
deepakpsl@yahoo.com

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Harry de Sayrah OAM, JP
Mobile +61 415 402 724
harold.166@hotmail.com

PUBLICATIONS

Sunil de Silva
Int. + 61 2 4340 5940
sunil.desilva41@gmail.com

EDITOR/LIBRARIAN

Doug Jones
int. + 61 2 8677 9260
Mobile +61 415 378 861
12/11 Garthowen Crescent Castle Hill NSW 2154
dougjay20@gmail.com

SOCIAL CONVENOR

Amal Wahab
Mobile +61 411 888 182
amalwahab1555@gmail.com

LIFE MEMBER

Hugh Karunanayake
Mobile +61 448 998 024 Int. + 61 3 9878 5307
karu@internode.net.au

EX-OFFICIO

Thiru Arumugam Leslie Perera
Int. + 61 2 8850 4798 Mobile: +61 418 230 842
thiru.aru@gmail.com lesanvee@bigpond.com

Srikantha Nadarajah
Int. + 61 2 9980 1701
vsnada@bigpond.com.au

MELBOURNE CHAPTER CONVENOR

Hemal Gurusinghe
Mobile 0427 725 740
hemguru@hotmail.com

COLOMBO CHAPTER

Convenor/Local President
M.D.(Tony) Saldin
+9411 2936402 (Off.) +9411 2931315 (Res.)
Fax: 9411 2936377 Mobile: +94 777 363366
email: saldinclan@sltnet.lk

Immediate Past President

Deshamanya Tissa Devendra
+9411 2501 489 email: tisdev@sltnet.lk

Vice-Presidents

Mohan Rajasingham
+9411 258 6350/ 0722 234644
email: mohanandranee@gmail.com

Fredrick Medis

+ 0722 256993
email: fredrickmedis@gmail.com

Local Hon. Secretary

Anandalal Nanayakkara

+077 3272989

email: anandalal10@gmail.com

Local Hon. Treasurer

M. Asoka T. de Silva

Int. 011 282 2933 Mob. +94 775097517

email: desilvaasoka@yahoo.com

Committee Members

Srilal Perera

077 5743785 email: srilalp@ymail.com

Daya Wickramatunga

+9411 2786783/0773 174164

email: dashanwick@gmail.com

The Ceylanika

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From the Editor

Here is an excellent selection of articles (even if I say so) in this issue of the journal. Most authors are regular contributors, the topics are varied, subject matter treated knowledgeably, with considerable research applied into their writing with our discerning readers in mind all the time. To begin with Hugh Karunanaike takes on an everyday item that we see and use, day in and day out, something we seem to take for granted. Our furniture! And the author has tirelessly and with affection looked at the considerable contribution Sri Lankan craftsmen have made into the design and creation of chairs, tables, sofas, cabinets and other adornments, enriching them by the expert use of the varied textures and hues of timbers that grew in the forests of our salubrious country. We have tried to depict pictures those creations on our cover pages for the delight and enjoyment of our readers.

Next we have a profusely illustrated history of an Australian family living in colonial Ceylon. Bill Mackie, an original member of the CSA, chronicles the life experiences of his family living in early 20th Century Ceylon/Sri Lanka till the family connections ended in Ceylon in 1959. Copeland Mackie's family lived in Horton Place in Colombo while Copeland worked on a tea estate in Badulla. This is an excellent recollection of the facets of life in a tea plantation in Sri Lanka.

Thiru Arumugam portrays the beginnings of higher education in Ceylon with the installation in 1921 of the Ceylon University College and takes the reader on a journey of the first 15 years of the College's existence. He concludes with worthwhile biographical notes on some distinguished alumni - all well-known

and famous names like JR Jayewardene who became President of the country and others who rose to top in their careers in the Civil Service, politics, science, education, engineering, history and many more.

In March this year, a special anniversary – the 100th in fact – of the signing of the Kandyan Convention of 1815 was remembered. We studied about the impenetrable hills of Kandy that the Portuguese, Dutch and British failed to conquer, in history class in school. But there's a world more about the rebellions and machinations between interested parties in this significant chapter in the history of our country. In "The Kandyan Convention – did we have a better option?" Dr Paltiha Kohona examines what really took place behind the politics of the signing of the convention between the British and the Kandyan Chiefs and the aftermath. Makes interesting reading and possibly provides researchers more openings to probe further.

While M. Asoka T. De Silva concludes his excellent series on "Brief biographies of classical writers and historians who wrote on Sri Lanka", it was surprising to learn that scholars have had Sri Lanka in their sights from centuries gone. Magnificent work Asoka. More of the same please.

We are happy to reproduce the full text of CSA member Ananda Amaranath's talk in Sydney on "Murders in the Vicarage: Mathew Peries Case". Something that may have absorbed our interest in the late 1940s, makes terrific reading now.

There is also all the usual news and information about CSA activities in Sydney and our Melbourne and Colombo chapters.

So much history and culture brought to our mailbox - what more can we ask.

Enjoy, invite as many friends to join the club!

LOOKING BACK - The Ceylankan No: 2 of April 1998

Did the Hope Diamond come from Sri Lanka?



Pic courtesy Wikipedia

George D Winius in his book "The fatal history of Portuguese Ceylon" states that the first known owner of the Hope Diamond was Don Felipe Mascarenas, Viceroy General of Ceylon since 1648. [Jean-Baptiste] Tavernier who knew the Viceroy well wrote that "there never was a Viceroy half so rich as Don Felipe Mascarenas. He possessed a great quantity of diamonds - all stones of great weight, from ten to forty karats - two notably which

he showed me while at Goa. One was a thick stone weighing 57, the other 67 1/2 karats, both being clear of good water and Indian cut". It is on record that when Louis XIV bought the Hope from Tavernier, it was 67 karats in weight. It is possible, therefore, that the stone came from the possession of Mascarenas.

The Viceroy Mascarenas was notorious for his illegal confiscation of wealth from both lay and spiritual institutions under his control. While in Ceylon, he is alleged to have trafficked illegally in jewels, cinnamon and elephants, selling them directly to rulers in India, especially the King of Golconda. It is possible, therefore, that the Hope Diamond was acquired in Ceylon by Mascarenas, and this sheds a new light on the history of this famed jewel.

(Note: Worth digging deeper into this story, anyone?)

Our Readers write

Wonderful issue

The May 2019 issue of *The Ceylankan* has arrived with a wonderful article from the Editor on the recent Easter attacks on Sri Lanka. It was an article that touched poignantly on our deepest fears and hopes – thank you.

The magazine also covered much that was a part of our lives – Hugh Karunanyake's piece on Colombo renewed memories of the Fort where in my younger days, I travelled each day to work in one of the companies he mentioned – only to end the article with a sigh of sadness that these things were no more.

The tale of Saradiel, returned me to childhood when our father would recite a poem – only the first few lines of which I remember of "Utuwankande's Saradiel Appu" as we drove on the straightest road imaginable towards the foot of the hill – our father telling us that high up on that hill Saradiel would watch for carriages coming on the road when he would rush down, rob the passengers of their money and jewellery and later, Robin Hood style, distribute his gleanings to the poor.

All this was followed by Somasiri Devendra's sobering article "A Call To Remember" as in the West we remembered the 75th anniversary of D Day and shown once again the long, long lines of white crosses on European cemeteries.

With a special thank you to all at *The Ceylankan*.

GERALDINE DE SARAM - JANSZ (Ontario, Canada).

Buildings in Colombo Fort

Many thanks for (yet another) interesting and very informative article by Hugh Karunanayake. It gives us so much historical background of the buildings contained in the Colombo Fort area.

Hugh also raises a very timely concern about the future of the area and the challenge awaiting the urban planners – their work, no doubt, being made more difficult by factions that would rather have any remembrances of the 'colonial era' be consigned to neglect and eventual ruin. The Fort is a special place and was the 'birth place' of country's 'modern' development in trade and commerce and each of those institutions (Port & Harbour, Hotels, the Senate, Postal Services, Newspapers, Banks, Department Stores and Produce Brokers and Trading Houses) are represented there, by historic buildings of that period. So preservation is essential, if we are to retain some sense of our history.

Unfortunately, some of the damage has already been done. The post-fire rebuild (in 1983) on the old site of what was the National and Grindlays Bank, would look well if it were sited on most

locations along the Galle Road; but is sadly and glaringly misplaced in the midst of the colonial architecture of all the buildings that surround it.



• It opened in 1881 as the National Bank of India, then amalgamated as the National & Grindlays Bank. The building was destroyed by a fire in 1981 (when 100 years old) and rebuilt (I think, hurriedly) in 1983. It was then, for a short time, called the ANZ-Grindlays and now trades as the Standard Charter Bank. (Photo below).



There will no doubt be much scope to construct all that is ultra-modern in the new Port City, but (as Hugh suggests) opportunities need to be seriously explored for the possibilities to re-vitalise the old Fort area and so preserve the look and ambiance of the place; that so many of us knew and enjoyed and that the present and future generations could appreciate and experience an age passed – that is also a part of their history.

AUBREY KOELMEYER, (Nakhon Ratchima, Thailand).

Your views are invaluable!

Do you have a point of view to share with our readers? Can you shed some new light on a topic discussed in the Journal? Is there anything you like or dislike published here and have something constructive to say about it? You can air your views with us. Your opinion is most welcome in the Letters column. Please keep them brief, no more than 500 words, preferably. Letters may be edited because of length and/or content.

The Magic of Antique Euro-Sinhalese furniture

by HUGH KARUNANAYAKE



A fact that is hardly acknowledged by Sri Lankans today is its rich bio-diversity resources, a mix possibly unmatched by any other country in the world. One of its great renewable natural resources was the diversity of its timbers. Some of the most exotic hard woods in the world like calamander, ebony and satin grew in abundance before the European conquest of the country's maritime area in the 16th Century.

Calamander the most beautiful and rare timber used in furniture making, for instance, was almost exclusively grown in Sri Lanka, small parts of the Coromandel Coast, and in some of the islands of the West Indies. A tree that takes over 200 years to reach maturity, it has been axed out of existence and not even farmed because of the age taken for the tree to grow into maturity. The calamander is among endangered near extinct tropical flora, but as in the case of other endangered plants, little or no activism from the conservation lobby has been observed, as fauna appears to be the preferred menu on the conservationist's agenda. The disappearance of forests laden with rich tropical timbers has been largely due to the wholesale felling of forests for plantation agriculture, and in later years, what was left was systematically removed for furniture making.

There have been many historians who have referred to the quality of the craft of the Sinhalese furniture maker. Prominent among them was JW Bennett in *Ceylon and its Capabilities*, 1843, and Henry Charles Sirr in his two volume *Ceylon and the Cingalese* 1850. There was also Ananda Coomaraswamy's *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* 1908, which reflected on the quality, the technical detail, and the efficacy of the tools used by the Sinhalese cabinet maker. Given that there is no recorded tradition of furniture making in Ceylon prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1505, the use of timber in earlier days was confined largely to building construction and boat building. RL Brohier who authored the book "Furniture of the Dutch Period in Ceylon" in 1969, based it on a collection of photozincography plates made under the supervision of Dr JD Pearson, the Director of the National Museum in 1933, and thus brought to light the craftsmanship of the Dutch cabinet maker. In recent times there have been some in-depth studies of the furniture making craft in Ceylon reviewed by Robin Jones, Course leader of the Fine Arts Valuation Course at the Southampton Institute, and Amin Jaffer author of the well researched tome

"Furniture from British India and Ceylon" (2001), with particular reference to the collections at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Peabody Essex Museum. Robin Jones collaborated in this production.

To get an idea of the unique value of Ceylonese furniture, it would be most appropriate to quote Robin Jones from his introduction to furniture from Ceylon in Amin Jaffer's book. "The British were relative latecomers to Ceylon. The East India Company seized control of the Maritime Provinces of the island from the Dutch in 1796, and placed them under the command of the Madras Presidency. These provinces were made a crown colony in 1802 and with the capture of Kandy in 1815, the entire Island came under British dominion. From their earliest years in Ceylon, European visitors commented on the skills of local craftsmen in working with precious raw materials. Early 19th Century British chroniclers likewise commented on the proficiency of Ceylonese craftsmen, particularly in working with wood. For example Robert Percival observed in 1803 that the "Cinglese are ingenious and expert artificers and display particular dexterity in gold, silver, and carpenter's work", and JW Bennett writing in 1843, noted that local woodworkers "make very durable and beautiful cabinet furniture of every description". The principal centres of western style furniture production in Ceylon were all located in precisely those areas where the longest contact existed between Europeans and the indigenous population, in the island's Maritime Provinces to the South and South West of the island. Important centres of cabinet making included Galle in the South West of the island, and Moratuwa, just South of Colombo."

Prior to the British occupation, there were the Portuguese and the Dutch who occupied the Maritime Provinces from the mid-16th Century until the ousting of the Dutch by the British at the end of the 18th Century. The direct Western influence on the island commenced with the Portuguese who were responsible for the introduction of furniture such as benches, tables, chairs, screens, bedsteads and wardrobes. The Sinhalese word "almariya" for wardrobe is derived for instance from the Portuguese "almirah". Although basic items of furniture in the country, as are known in the modern world, were introduced by the Portuguese, the artistry, design, and sophistication with which Ceylonese furniture came to be associated with, was due to Dutch influence. There are items still scattered around the world, originating

from Ceylon which connoisseurs classify as "Indo-Portuguese". Those works as well as the exquisite items of furniture displayed in museums around the world described as originating from Ceylon during the 17th to the early 20th Centuries are a tribute to both Portuguese and Dutch craftsmanship and Sinhalese artistry. The Sinhalese carpenter was able to draw from age old traditions of motifs and design that have evolved from the local environment. That placed the unique stamp of Anglo-Sinhalese craftsmanship on these works of consummate skill. According to Brohier, there are records which suggest to there being organisations similar to the craft guilds of Europe, in Dutch Ceylon. Set up under Dutch master craftsmen, large numbers of Portuguese-Sinhalese and others from the traditional Sinhalese carpentering families found employment in these craft guilds.

Most of the valuable items of furniture which survived from the days of the Portuguese and Dutch in Ceylon, were made of ebony wood, and have been designed with Sinhala motifs stamped by the artistry of the Sinhala wood carver. (See Front Cover). In 1693 the Dutch Governor Van Rhee presented a throne and foot stool to King Vimala Dharmasuriya II. It bears all the signs of a collaborative effort between Dutch and Sinhalese craftsmen. The overall design appears to be of European origin, and the exquisite gold sheeting covered with precious stones was the work of Sinhalese goldsmiths and silversmiths. When Ceylon was ceded to the British, this magnificent chair and stool were part of the "loot" sent to England and placed in Windsor Castle. They were ceremonially returned to Ceylon in September 1934 and are now in the Colombo Museum.

Typical of the early Anglo-Sinhalese chair which seemed to have been popular from the 16th Century onwards, is the "rush bottomed" ebony chair which is now a rare and much sought after piece of furniture in today's Sri Lanka, but which ubiquitously appears in European and American antique auctions commanding high prices. Characterised by profuse carvings of traditional Sinhalese motifs such as the pala peti or lotus flower, or the hansa swan or vaka deka or double curve sometimes in relief and often highlighted on both sides of the back rest, they usually have Jacobean style twisted legs, stretchers and rails. The seat usually of rattan, the only aspect that needs attention through wear, as the timber is timeless and lasts through centuries. (See Back Cover bottom right).

Unfortunately not many accumulations of early ebony furniture remain in Sri Lanka, the only known collection which was put together by Sir Thomas Villiers, former Chairman of George Steuart and Co, who kept them in a go-down when the company was in possession of the string of properties along Steuart Place in which their Directors resided. Many of the items in the collection are featured in

Brohier's book. The Steuart bungalows (heritage buildings which should have been protected) were demolished in the 1970s and the Hotel Oberoi built on its lands and since named the Cinnamon Grand Hotel. The fate of the furniture collection, however, remains a mystery. Arguably, the most handsome and sought after timber in the world is the exotic calamander, which like exotic fauna is on the brink of extinction due to over exploitation. From the same family as ebony, the calamander is a variegated timber with attractive black striations on a honey coloured background. Some of the recorded specimens of furniture includes the calamander bureau cabinet from Ceylon (see top left Back Cover) gifted to the last Governor-General of the East Indies, Tjarda van Starkenorgh Stachower, and is now displayed at the Djakarta Museum. It is a large bureau cabinet made entirely of calamander.

Aesthetically, the western collector preferred items that used both calamander and ebony, a very attractive and exotic combination. A popular item of calamander furniture of the 18th and 19th Centuries was the round center table with the top surface in calamander and the pedestal base in ebony. The table (see Front Cover top right) is a beautiful example and carries an inscription "Presented to Mrs R.B. Tytler by the parents of the Kandy Sunday Scholars with their grateful and affectionate regards. New Year's

• Hansiputuwa Day 1936."



This table was sold by Sothebys for an unknown price. Recent sale prices for a similar item reached around US \$100,000. Two master craftsmen from Galle whose signature had appeared among these choice

creations are AB Andiris and Andries de Costa.

The Dutch ruled the maritime provinces of Ceylon for around one and a half centuries, leaving a profound impact on the country's ethnicity, its ethos, and, of course, on its economy. There are several aspects of the life of today's Sri Lankan which owe its origins to some aspect of Dutch influence. Among these, of course, is the design of homes, and the nature of household effects such as furniture. Two items of furniture that have the classic hallmark of the Dutch is the Dutch chest or "pettagama" (see Back Cover bottom left) used originally to store rice in wealthy homes, and later as a repository for household goods. The Dutch Chest was originally of hardwood but its style copied and reproduced with elaborate brass fittings, by Sinhalese craftsmen, later came in the softer and cheaper jak, teakwood, and nadun woods.

The rarer Dutch *Burgomaster* (see Back Cover) chair which was a relatively expensive item was originally found in the homes of leading Dutch officials, or wealthy merchants. An original burgomaster is extremely rare in Ceylon but can

be seen sporadically in wealthy European and American homes.

Apart from furniture *per se*, the Sinhalese cabinet maker of the 19th Century developed an expertise in the making of exquisite work boxes and writing slopes of calamander, sometimes using porcupine quills for embellishment. Most of these boxes made by craftsmen in Galle and Matara were highly sought after in the Victorian era and later when sewing as a feminine skill was highly regarded, boxes made of tortoise shell were very much in demand. The shell was imported from the Malacca Straits and the Maldives Islands, and the work was principally executed by craftsmen around Galle. Amin Jaffer who was a curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum overseeing its Asian collections, and later consultant for Auction houses Christies and Sothebys and Asian furniture expert on the popular BBC presentation "the Antiques Roadshow" has this to say "At the Paris exhibition of 1900 a sizeable collection of tortoise shell articles was shown, including boxes mounted in gold and silver. That time the finest stock was carried by Don Theodoris & Co., a jeweller in Chatham Street, Colombo. The work box (shown above) made of calamander, inlaid with ivory, and highlighted by red and black lac with scalloped front was presented to the V&A Museum in 1908 by Mrs Armitage-Ogden.



• The work box made of calamander, inlaid with ivory, highlighted by red and black lac with scalloped front.

The craftsmen of Galle/Matara were also skilled in ivory work, of which many exquisite objects were exhibited at the British Empire Exhibitions held in England during the late 19th Century. The industries based on ivory and tortoise shell are no longer existent due to worldwide bans on these products thus rendering traditionally associated craft skills totally obsolete. The reputation for skilled work by craftsmen in Galle made them very much in demand for a variety of skilled tasks, and it was with pride that they claimed their origins from Galle. "Gama Gallay" also had its downside when its not so skilled denizens were found out and told off scornfully by employers as "Weda bariwunath, gama Gallay"?

The discussion here was confined to some representative albeit unique items of Anglo Sinhalese origin, and does not reflect the wide diversity of furniture and objects that were produced in Ceylon since the 16th Century. The most popular and exotic woods that were prominent in the choice pieces under

discussion does not do justice to the diversity of timber resources in Sri Lanka and which in its richness and utility could match that of any other country in the world. The main woods that were discussed were calamander (*Diospyros quaesita*), and ebony (*Diospyros ebenum*). There are, however, a whole range of exotic timbers in Sri Lanka that have been exploited over the years to produce the marvellous items of furniture the island boasted of. Satinwood (*Chloroxylon swietiana*), Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) and Nadun (*Pericopsis mooniana*) are all hardwoods of exotic appearance and have sustained or supplemented the furniture industry over the years. Several others such as Teak (*tectona grandis*) Halmilla (*Berrya amryanilla*), Suriya (*Thespesia populnoa*), Kumbuk (*Terminalia glabra*), Mara (*Albizia molucamana*) and Kohomba (*Azadirachta indica*) are also popular woods in the furniture making industry.

The role of the Forest Department in the conservation and propagation of trees such as teak, and ebony has to be acknowledged although those efforts seem to have declined in recent years. Some major factors account for the decline of the furniture making skills since the Victorian era in Ceylon. Modernisation and the growth of office related employment, the demand for English as a language and medium of upward social mobility, have contributed in many ways to the decline of craft training. With the influence of the west, the value and significance of the "guru/shisya" relationship lost relevance and its place in the social order. In Western countries these were institutionalised in a guild system where the Master Craftsmen would train apprentices. The lack of institutionalised training to sustain the quality of expertise within the industry, and to further progress its technical advancement is an aspect which merits attention in Sri Lanka today. The furniture making industry in Sri Lanka of today is largely based in Moratuwa, where standard designs are used for the mass market. The artistry and skill of the 19th Century craftsman, however, is conspicuously absent and the timbers used are those that are easy to work with. In countries of the West, training in craft skills such as in carpentering are popular in contemporary Technical Training Schools. These are often supplemented by well structured apprenticeship schemes which ensure not only high standards of craftsmanship, but foster further development. The Department of Small Industries in collaboration with the national crafts marketing organisation, Laksala, has done some useful work in this regard, but more attention is necessary at the training and production stages if the furniture industry is to regain its acclaimed status of the past. Large scale farming of exotic trees on a long term basis is also not impractical given the frequency with which unproductive tea and rubber lands are being abandoned.



The first 15 years of the Ceylon University College: 1921 to 1935

by THIRU ARUMUGAM

The Ceylon University College (CUC) was founded in Colombo in 1921 and prepared students for the external degree examinations of the University of London. It ceased to exist in 1942 when it was transformed into the University of Ceylon. This article traces the progress of the College during the first 15 years of its existence and concludes with biographical notes of about 20 distinguished alumni of the College who studied there during those first 15 years.

The Ceylon University Association was founded in 1906 and campaigned for the establishment of a University rank institution in Ceylon. Among the prime movers were James Peiris, Marcus Fernando and Ponnambalam Arunachalam. In 1912 the Macleod Committee appointed by Governor McCallum recommended that a University College be established in Colombo. It would be called the Ceylon University College (CUC) and be based in the buildings of Royal College. It would be affiliated to a British University, preferably Oxford, have courses in Arts and Sciences and be open to women students as well. It would be largely residential in character with student hostels. The College would in due course be converted into

It belonged to Arthur de Zoysa, grandson of the philanthropist Sir Charles Henry de Zoysa who was reputed to be the richest Ceylonese in the 19th Century. The building was re-named 'College House' and was the first home of the Ceylon University College which was officially opened on 24 January 1921 (Figure 1). The grounds of College House had sufficient space for three tennis courts and later on the University Press and the Junior Common Room were built on these grounds. The College was initially under the supervision of E Evans, the Director of Education and the President was *ex-officio*, the Governor of Ceylon, W H Manning.

Affiliation was not to the University of Oxford as originally proposed but to the University of London. Lectures in Arts and Sciences were held in College House, but for Science Practicals, the students had to go to the laboratories of the Ceylon Technical College in Maradana. In the first academic year, 115 students were enrolled and eight of them sat for the external degree final examinations of the University of London. Seven of them passed, two of them obtaining First Divisions, including S Nadarasar, later to become a Lecturer in Mathematics in the College.

Admission to the College was initially by invitation. Every year when the results of the Cambridge Senior Examination were released, those who obtained Honours level passes in this examination as well as those who passed the London Matriculation Examination received personal letters from the Registrar of the College inviting them to enrol in the College for degree level studies. All did not accept the invitation. A few who could afford it proceeded to UK for further studies. There were others whose family financial situations were such that they had to become wage earners immediately and thus missed the opportunity of tertiary education. A popular occupation for them was to join the Government Clerical Service.

Professor Robert Marrs

At the beginning of the academic year 1921-22, Prof Robert Marrs MA (Oxon), was appointed Principal of the College. (Figure 2). He continued to hold this post for 19 years until he retired in 1939. He was succeeded by Sir Ivor Jennings who was mandated with the specific task of converting the Ceylon University College into the fully-fledged University of Ceylon, which he achieved in 1942. The initial staff of the College in 1921 included Professors



• (Figure 1) 'College House' the first home of the University College, 1921.

a degree awarding institution. The proposals were accepted by the Secretary of State for Colonies but there was no immediate progress due to the advent of World War I.

Post-war Progress

After the war was over, in 1920, the Government purchased 'Regina Walauwa' a large building standing on extensive grounds in Colombo at the junction of Thurstan Road and Queens Road.



• (Figure 2) Prof. Robert Marrs MA (Oxon).

of: English; Classics and Philosophy; Modern History and Economics; Physics; and Chemistry. In October 1922 the first Professor of Mathematics was appointed. He was C Suntharalingam and he was the first Ceylonese Professor in the College. In October 1921, construction of the

new CUC Science Laboratories and lecture rooms was completed and instruction in science subjects was moved to these new buildings from the Ceylon Technical College premises. In October 1923 construction of the new buildings for Royal College was completed and the former Royal College Classroom block built in 1911 was handed over to the CUC and Arts lectures were transferred to this block from College House (Figure 3). CUC now occupied about 17 acres of real estate in a prime location in the heart of Colombo, in the wedge between Thurstan Road and Reid Avenue, including spacious cricket and football playing fields. Within the next couple of years, King George Hall was built behind the lecture rooms. It is one of the oldest theatres in Colombo and is used as a theatre as well as for University functions. It has folding partition doors which enable it to be used simultaneously as two lecture halls.

By 1935 the total number of students on the roll was 540 including 55 women students. During the period 1921 to 1935, the total number of CUC students who graduated from the University of London was 337 including 25 women graduates.

In 1935 the Professors in the College included E F C Ludowyk (English), S Whiteley (Classics), C Suntharalingam (Mathematics), S A Pakeman (Modern History and Economics), R Marrs (Philosophy), J P Andrews (Physics), A Kandiah (Chemistry), and N G Ball (Botany). Courses were provided in Science, Mathematics and Arts subjects including Oriental Languages. Among the Lecturers, most of whom later became Professors, were: H A Passe (English), J L C Rodrigo (Classics), U D R Caspersz (Mathematics), B B Das Gupta (Economics), W J F LaBrooy (History), G P Malalasekera (Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese), K Kanapathipillai (Tamil), A W Mailvaganam (Physics), and E L Fonseka (Chemistry).

Battle of the Sites

It was during the period reviewed by this article that the location of the future University of Ceylon was decided after the so-called 'Battle of the Sites'. In the 1920s the battle became very vocal and attracted the attention of politicians as well as intellectuals. Those involved included D R Wijewardene, D B Jayatilake, Sir James Peiris, Sir P Arunachalam, Sir P Ramanathan and Prof Robert Marrs. They formed into two groups, with one group favouring Colombo as the site for the future University of Ceylon, and the other group favouring a residential University in the Dumbara Valley near Kandy.

In 1926 Governor Hugh Clifford appointed a Committee with Solicitor General M T Akbar as Chairman to propose a location for the future University. The Committee Report dated February



• (Figure 3) Former Royal College building transferred to University College, 1923.

1927 said that they are of the opinion that no better site can be found than in the Dumbara Valley in the Kandy District. This was endorsed by the Legislative Council in 1928 and a University Commission was appointed to establish, incorporate and regulate the University of Ceylon. The exact site issue was again re-examined by a Committee in 1936 and in 1938 the State Council purchased the present site in Peradeniya. Some Rules and Regulations of the Ceylon University College

Some of the Rules and Regulations of the College during the period under Review were:

- The College was open to women students (compared with this the first class of women students was admitted to the Harvard Medical School only in 1945).
- Residential Hostels were in Government buildings leased out to organisations to run them. The hostel charges for full board and lodging was about Rs 100 per term.
- The College was administered by the University College Council and Academic Committee.
- Lecture fees payable by students were Rs 50 per term.
- University of London examination fees were a little over Rs 100 per examination.
- No student was permitted to leave Colombo during term time without permission from the Principal.
- Any absence from lectures for more than two consecutive days required a Medical Certificate to be submitted.
- A student can only sit as a private candidate for any other examination with the permission of the Principal.
- Students can only proceed to the next year of a

Course if they had attended 80 per cent of the lectures and passed any relevant examinations.

- Numerous Scholarships and Studentships were awarded by the College.
- Four Scholarships, based on the results of the Final Honours examination, were awarded to students to proceed to UK for further studies, one each in Arts, Oriental Languages, Science and Mathematics.

College Hostels

The College had four Students Hostels which provided full board and lodging. They were all within easy walking distance of the College. They were invariably full because they were convenient and provided good value for money.

The University College Christian Hostel, better known as Brodie House, was located in Bagatelle Road. Subsequently it moved to Bullers Road. It was run by the Young Men's Christian Association. The Warden in 1935 was J L C Rodrigo MA (Oxon). It was primarily meant for Christian students but non-Christian students were admitted if there were vacancies. The hostel fees varied from Rs 96 to Rs 108 a term depending on the room occupied. This fee included room rent, lighting, service, meals, laundry, games (tennis, volley ball and indoor games) and newspapers. No charge was made for retaining the room during the long vacation.

Union Hostel was in a large building in Guildford Crescent and had two branches, Arunachalam Hall and Jayatilaka Hall. It provided accommodation for a total of 70 students. The Warden in 1935 was A Ginige MA. Hostel fees and services were similar to Brodie House.

Catholic Hostel was in a large purpose-built building on Havelock Road, opposite the Police Park. It was under Catholic management and the Warden in 1935 was Rev. Father T B Cooray DD. It could accommodate 30 students. It was meant primarily for Catholic students but others were accommodated if there were vacancies. The charges were Rs 90 per term. Facilities were similar to the other College Hostels but in addition it had a Gymnasium.

The University College Women's Hostel was in a building named 'Cruden' on Queen's Road almost opposite College House. It was founded under the auspices of the Christian Council in Ceylon. The Warden in 1935 was Miss E H Rutnam MA. The Hostel fees were Rs 132 per term. The facilities were similar to the other College Hostels, except that it did not have any tennis courts. The College House tennis courts were, however, across the road. It was primarily intended for women students of the College but other women students of University standing were admitted if there were vacancies.

This summarises the origin and growth of the Ceylon University College over the first fifteen years of its existence. It continued to prosper over the next seven years until it was transformed into the

University of Ceylon in 1942. Biographical notes about twenty distinguished alumni who studied in the College during the fifteen year period under review are appended below. Selection of the twenty names from the many distinguished alumni has been quite arbitrary.

Biographical notes about some distinguished alumni of the College between 1921 and 1935

Samson Felix Amarasinghe graduated with a BA Second Division in 1922. He was awarded a University Scholarship and studied in Cambridge University. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service and rose to the position of Secretary to the Treasury from 1956 to 1961. This is the highest post that can be held by a public servant.

Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe graduated in 1934 with a BA First Class Classics degree. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service rising to the highest position of Secretary to the Treasury from 1961 to 1963. In 1963 he was appointed High Commissioner in India. From 1967 to 1980 he was Ceylon's Representative to the United Nations. In 1976 he was briefly President of the UN General Assembly. His brother Clarence Amerasinghe started a motor car dealership called Car Mart and imported Peugeot and Volkswagen cars.

Sanmugam Arumugam graduated in 1927 with a degree in Physics and Mathematics. He proceeded to Kings College, London, where he obtained a Civil Engineering degree. Returning to Ceylon he worked in the Irrigation Department. He was the first alumnus of the CUC to be recruited as an Irrigation Engineer. After retirement, he joined the newly formed Water Resources Board as a working Director. He was President of the Institution of Engineers, Sri Lanka.

Charles Percival de Silva obtained a First Class Honours degree in Mathematics from CUC in 1933. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service in 1935 and rose to the position of Director of Land Development in 1949. After retirement he entered politics as the MP for Polonnaruwa in 1952 and was appointed Minister of Lands, Land Development and Agriculture in 1956. From 1965 he was Minister of Lands, Irrigation and Power. He was an MP for 17 years.

Anthony Theodoric Armand de Souza popularly known as "Doric", graduated in 1934 with a BA English First Class. He was awarded a scholarship and proceeded to UK for post-graduate studies. Returning in 1937 he joined CUC as a Lecturer in English. He joined the Lanka Sama Samaja Party. During World War II days the party leaders N M Perera, Colvin R de Silva and Philip Gunawardena were jailed. Doric with the help of sympathetic jailers helped them to escape and arranged for them to be smuggled to India. In 1952 he joined the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, as a Senior Lecturer and later Reader in English. From 1957 to 1969 he was a Senator. From 1970 to 1974 he was Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Plantations when Colvin R de Silva was the Minister.

He retired from the post of Associate Professor, Kelaniya University.

Christie Jayaratnam Eliezer joined CUC in 1935 and graduated in 1938 with a BSc Mathematics First Class degree. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where he graduated in 1943, obtained a PhD in 1946 and a DSc in Mathematics in 1949. He was called to the Bar in the Middle Temple in 1949. Returning to Ceylon he was appointed Professor of Mathematics in the University of Ceylon at the age of 31 years. He was Dean of the Faculty of Science from 1954 to 1957. In 1959 he joined the University of Malaya as Professor of Mathematics, later becoming Dean of the Faculty of Science and finally Vice-Chancellor. In 1968 he joined La Trobe University, Melbourne as the first Professor of Applied Mathematics, later becoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Junius Richard Jayewardene, better known as 'JR' (Figure 4), entered CUC in 1926 and followed courses



• (Figure 4) President J R Jayewardene, notable alumnus.

in English, Latin, Logic and Economics. However, in 1928 he left CUC and joined Law College where he qualified as an Advocate. He was elected to the State Council in 1943 and was Finance Minister in Parliament from 1947 to 1953. On the death of Dudley Senanayake in 1973, he became the leader of the United National Party. He became President of Sri Lanka in 1978 and held the post till he retired in 1989. **Evelyn Frederick Charles Ludowyk** graduated with a BA English First Class in 1928. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where in Part II of the English Tripos he got a First Class and won the Oldham Prize for Shakespeare. He later completed his PhD from Cambridge. He joined the staff of CUC in 1932 and was appointed Professor of English in 1936. He was Dean of the Faculty of Arts in Peradeniya in 1952. He expanded the scope of the University's English Dramatic Society's productions to make it accessible to the general public and also made a significant impact on the development of Sinhala drama in the University. Due to his wife's

ill health, he took early retirement in 1956 and moved to London where he was a Visiting Lecturer in the University of London. He wrote several books but he is perhaps best remembered for his play written in 1942, "He comes from Jaffna".

Arumugam Wisuvalingam Mailvaganam graduated in 1926 with a BSc First Class in 1926. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where he passed the Natural Science Tripos in 1928 and obtained a PhD in Physics in 1938. Returning to Ceylon he was appointed Professor of Physics in the CUC in 1939, a post he held until he retired in 1966. He was Dean of the Faculty of Science in the University of Ceylon from 1948 to 1954 and also acted as Vice-Chancellor on several occasions. He was awarded the OBE in 1949 and Vidya Jyothi in 1985. He was President of the Ceylon Association for the Advancement of Science.

Garrett Champness Mendis obtained a second class honours degree in History from CUC in 1925. He went to UK and studied in the London School of Oriental Studies where he examined the chronicles of Ceylon and obtained his PhD in 1931. Later on, the University of London awarded him a DLitt in 1957. He was a Lecturer in CUC from 1937. He was a pioneer historian on the History of Ceylon and wrote numerous books and articles.

Robert Hoisington Paul graduated with BSc First Division in 1924. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where he studied Electrical Engineering and passed the Mechanical Science Tripos First Class. He joined the Ceylon Technical College where he rose to the position of Director. He worked tirelessly to obtain recognition of the Engineering Degree level classes held by the Technical College and in 1942 the University of London gave provisional recognition for the students to sit for their external engineering degree examinations. In 1950 after producing 104 engineers, these classes were taken over to form the Engineering Faculty of the University of Ceylon and he became the first Professor of Electrical Engineering. He was Dean of the Faculty of Engineering from 1965 to 1966.

Eustace Oliver Edwin Pereira passed the BSc with First Class Honours in 1928. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge to study Civil Engineering and passed the Mechanical Science Tripos in 1931. He was the first Professor of Civil Engineering in the University of Ceylon and the founding Dean of the Engineering Faculty in 1950. From 1969 to 1971 he was Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya. In 1986 he was awarded the title of Vidya Jyothi, the highest honour for science in Sri Lanka.

Nanayakkarapathirige Martin Perera, better known as 'NM', entered CUC in 1925 and passed the Intermediate Arts examination in 1926. He switched over to the Intermediate Economics course in 1927 but

left a few months later to study in the London School of Economics where he obtained a degree, a PhD, as well as a DSc in Economics. He was founder member of the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaja Party in 1935. He continuously held the Ruanwella or Yatiyantota seats in Parliament from 1936 to 1977. He was Minister of Finance from 1970 to 1975.

Peter of Alcantara Pillai, better known as Peter Pillai, as a schoolboy obtained distinctions in all eight subjects in the Cambridge Senior Examination, the highest number in the British Empire. He graduated from CUC in 1923 with a BSc First Class and in 1925 with BSc First Class in Double Mathematics. He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to Cambridge where he obtained an MA. He entered the Oblates of Mary Order in Belgium. He was ordained as a Priest and obtained a PhD from Rome Dominican University and a Doctorate in Divinity from Rome. In 1940 he was appointed Rector of St Josephs College. He was the Warden of CUC's Catholic Students Hostel. In 1953 he founded the Aquinas College of Higher Studies which conducted degree level classes.

Murugeysen Rajendra graduated with a BA History Second Class in 1933. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service in 1934 and held positions of Government Agent and Commissioner of Lands and Land Development. His final position was Secretary to the Treasury and Head of the Public Service from 1968 to 1971. After retirement he was Chairman of the Freedom from Hunger Foundation.

Bamunusinghearachchige Don Rampala entered CUC and passed the Intermediate Science examination. He joined the Ceylon Government Railway as a Special Apprentice in 1931 and in 1933 he passed the BSc London as an external candidate. In 1949 he was appointed as the first Ceylonese Chief Mechanical Engineer of the CGR and was later the General Manager from 1955 to 1970. He improved the railway system and introduced Diesel Electric Locomotives in 1953, Colour Light Signalling in the 1950s and initiated express trains like the Uda Rata Menike and Yal Devi. In 1956 the Institution of Locomotive Engineers, London, voted him the best Diesel Locomotive Engineer east of Suez.

Ediriweera Sarachchandra entered CUC in 1933 and graduated with First Class Honours in Oriental Languages in 1936. At his parents' insistence he sat for the Ceylon Civil Service examination and came first in order of merit, but did not join the service. He went to Santiniketan in India to study Indian Philosophy and Music and joined the University of Ceylon as a Lecturer in Pali in 1947 and ultimately became an Emeritus Professor. He is recognised as Ceylon's leading Playwright and wrote the Sinhala dramas *Maname* and *Sinhabahu*. In 1988 he won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Literature.

Lokusatu Heva Sumanadasa obtained a BSc (General) Second Class Honours degree in 1931.

He was awarded a Government Scholarship and proceeded to study Aeronautical Engineering at Imperial College, London. After graduating, he was employed by the aircraft manufacturer, Handley Page. He returned to Ceylon in 1942. He was Head of Civil Engineering at the Ceylon Technical College, Maradana. He was the founder Director of the Ceylon College of Technology, Katubedde which is now the University of Moratuwa. He was Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka.

Herbert Ernest Tennekoon passed the BA in History with First Class Honours in 1934. He joined the Ceylon Civil Service and rose to the highest position of Secretary to the Treasury. He was the Country Representative to the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT). He was the country's Ambassador in Japan. In 1971 he was appointed Governor of the Central Bank.

Victor Tennekoon, brother of Herbert (above), passed the BA (General) degree in the second division in 1935. He subsequently entered Law College. In 1965 he was appointed Solicitor General and in 1972 he was appointed Attorney General. He was appointed Chief Justice in 1974. He was the Chancellor of the University of Peradeniya from 1979 to 1984.

Ahikuntakayo - The Ceylon Gypsy

Unlike their European cousins, the Ceylon gypsies are not known to thief and plunder. Nevertheless, they also detest any type of regular work. Our *Ahikuntakayo* yet avoid education of their children in schools for that would bind them to one locality, consequently they are generally illiterate (in the western sense of the word). They have their own medicines, prepared from indigenous herbs and roots and barks of trees. The chieftain usually attends to midwifery. Their marriages are of the simplest type: the bridegroom spreads a new mat on which he sits with the bride. They partake of a meal together at the end of which he places a bead chain of five strings round the bride's neck. The legend has it that in former times it was a gold chain and pendant that the bridegroom had to give his bride. One day a bridegroom forgot to bring his gold chain, so he was sent away to fetch the gold to make a chain, but he never returned. Ever since then they replaced the gold chain with a bead necklace.

Marriages are arranged while the children are yet young and a promise is made between the two intended fathers-in-law. A girl's dowry consists of a donkey, a dog, a snake or two in a cane basket and a knife or axe. Money has currently replaced the wealth in kind. The couple continue to live with the same band and breed their progeny. Sometimes adult families merge with other groups and they intermarry. (From *Ceylon Vagabond* by Lala Adithiya 1959).

Some history of an Australian family in colonial Ceylon

by Bill Mackie

I have two books that depict Ceylon/Sri Lanka in two different periods and from different aspects; they inspire me to discuss my family's connection and my birth in Ceylon. The first has a title pointing to the fascinating environment in which my parents lived early in the 20th Century. Both books show the multicultural nature of Ceylon's society that began centuries before that of Australia, and they display the island's beauty and interesting features. My family had two generations working in the tea industry. My story starts in about 1876, when my grandfather Copland Mackie joined the tea trade in Glasgow, Scotland, and ends when the last of our family connections left Ceylon in 1959. It makes me ponder on some social conditions prevailing in the British colonial period during the first half of the 20th Century and the changes since the country became a republic in 1972.

Three Mackie generations in Ceylon

1. Copland Mackie:

1860: Born at Fort Hare, South Africa, when the regiment of his father, Quartermaster William Mackie, was fighting in the 3rd Kaffir War in South Africa.

1871-1875: At George Watsons College in Edinburgh, Scotland. **1876-1885:** Started work in the tea trade in Glasgow. **1886:** Emigrated to Melbourne. Set up business as Copland Mackie & Co., tea brokers.

1892-1893: The severe recession and crash of many banks in Melbourne eventually forced Copland to merge his business with Fraser, Ramsay & Co., tea brokers, Melbourne.

1893: Copland married Mary Beatrice Walsh of Melbourne; lived in Caulfield area. **1909:** Copland was moved to Colombo to manage Eastern Export Co., a subsidiary of Fraser, Ramsay & Co. which later merged with Harrisons & Crosfield to form Harrisons, Ramsay & Co. **1919-1921:** Copland was sent to Harrisons office in Wellington, NZ. He retired in late 1921 and died in Melbourne in December 1921. His widow returned to her family in Ceylon and later to Mackie relatives in Scotland.

2.1 William Copland Mackie (Bill)

1894: Born in Melbourne. School until end of 1911.

1912: Travelled to Ceylon in 1912; worked as an SD (assistant manager) on Waldemar tea estate, Udapussellawa. Was a keen sportsman; as a member of Colombo Hockey & Football Club he gained the high jump record for Ceylon in 1913.

Three Mackie generations in Ceylon Copland's two daughters



• *Colombo Hockey & Football Club Sports, December 1913. New Ceylon record for High Jump set by William C. Mackie at 5 ft 6½ in. In 1927 Ceylon student Carl van Geyzelat of Cambridge University cleared 6 ft 2½ in.*

2.2 Beatrice Marjorie Mackie (Marjorie)

1895: Born Melbourne. At school in Toorak until end 1912. Moved to parents' home in Colombo in 1912. Moved to Edinburgh. 1914. Served in nursing service during WW1. Her fiancé was killed in action. In 1918 she returned to Ceylon. In 1919 she married Ernest Napper, PD of Glentilt Estate, Maskeliya. They had a daughter and a son, both at boarding schools in England. They retired to England in 1945. **1970:** Died in Exeter

2.3 Gladys Irene Mackie (Gladys)

1897: Born Melbourne. At school in Toorak until end of 1912. Moved to parents' home in Colombo in 1912. **1914:** Moved to Edinburgh, where she studied piano and singing for four years and played professionally accompanying in concerts.

1919: Married Oswald Boyd Forbes (Ossie) in Edinburgh in November, then returned with him to Colombo. She taught piano and singing, and played in concerts. **1921 to 1931:** she accompanied visiting international musicians in concerts in Colombo and Kandy. She was keen on tennis and golf, winning in 1936 the Ladies Golf Championship of Ceylon. concerts with Lionel Wendt.

1959: Moved with husband Ossie to London.

1978: Died in London.

Our three generations in Ceylon

2. William Copland Mackie (Bill)

1912-1917 When working on tea estates he joined Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps. 1917 Travelled to England. Joined RAF and trained unsuccessfully to be a pilot; then joined an infantry regiment as an officer, but was discharged due to chronic bronchitis and returned to Ceylon in 1918.



• *Mackie family in Colombo, Ceylon 1913.*
L-R standing: Copland Mackie, Mary Mackie, Eileen Wangrove (on holiday from Melbourne) Marjorie Mackie and others in row not identified.

2.1 William Copland Mackie (Bill)

1918-1921: Worked as an SD on Hingurugama Estate near Badulla. In **March 1921** he married Eileen Bates of Melbourne at Nuwara Eliya. **November 1921**, just before lunchtime on a Sunday, a car with the Colombo agent and a director of the company owning the estate arrived at the Mackie bungalow without prior warning. On finding Bill Mackie having a glass of beer before lunch the company's director sacked Bill immediately on the spot! Bill remained at Hingurugama until a replacement arrived in early 1922.

In **January 1922** their son **William Bruce Copland Mackie (Bill Jr.)** was born in Nuwara Eliya.

1922-1927 Bill Mackie joined the Galaha Ceylon Tea Estates & Agency Co. Until the start of 1927 the family lived at its Dunally Estate, Galaha, where Bill was manager; all tea produced was delivered to the Galaha factory. In 1927 he was PD and manager of the Galaha Estate and factory, so the family resided in the manager's bungalow.

September 1924: A second son **James Austin Copland Mackie** (Jim and later Jamie) was born in Kandy. Because of the prevailing British belief that 7-15 year-old children born in the tropics could not survive the cold winters of Britain or southern Australia these kids were sent off to boarding school or relatives in the home countries, so the Mackie family arranged in 1926 to move permanently back to Victoria in **late 1927**. **1928** Bill Mackie and family moved to a farm in northern Victoria.



• *Heywood, the Colombo home of Copland and Mary Mackie and family, This building in Horton Place is now occupied by the University of Visual and Performing Arts.*

“ *Bill Mackie and family moved to a farm in northern Victoria.* ”

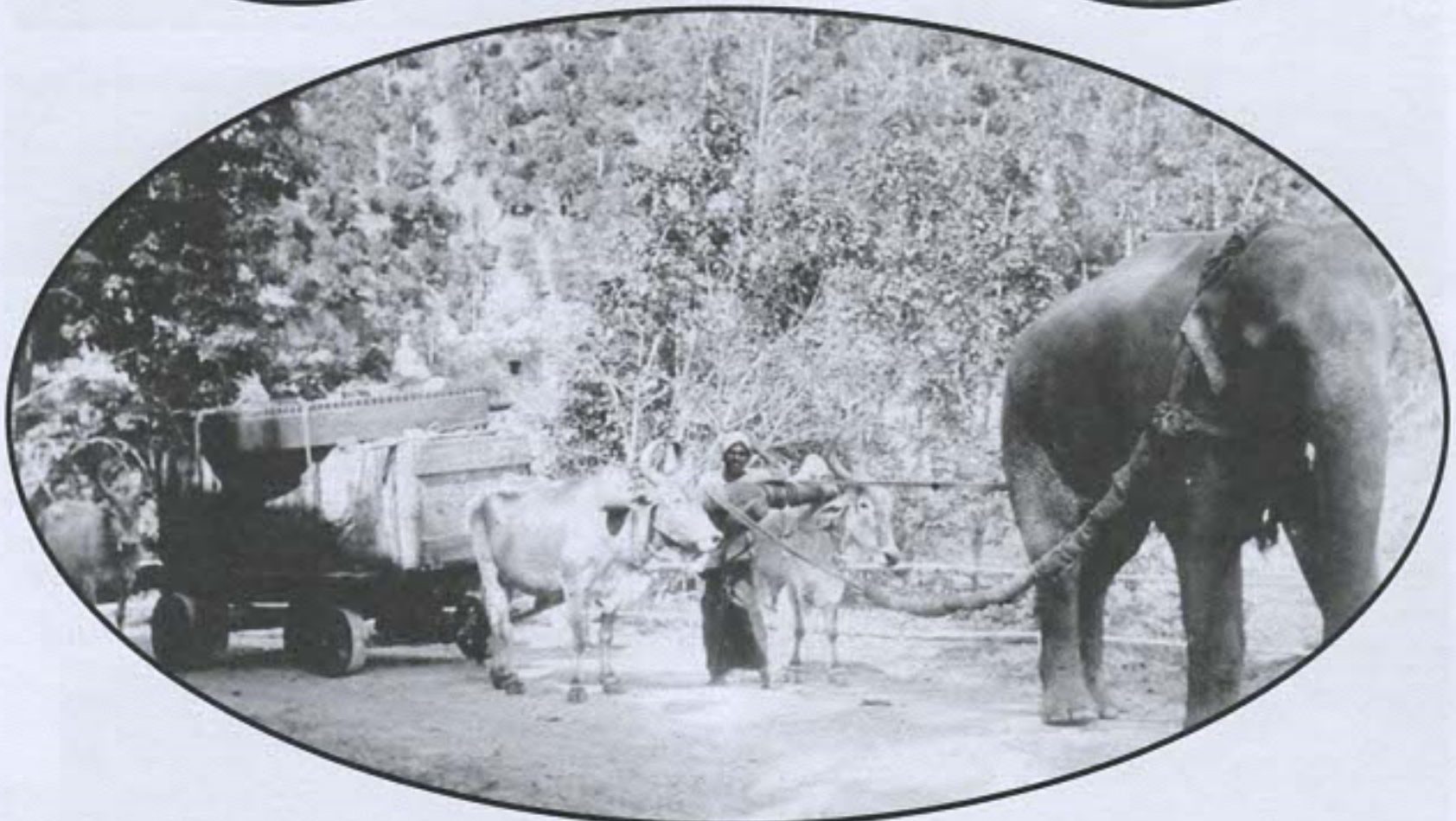


• *Copland and Mary's daughters Marjorie and Gladys relaxing downstairs.*



• *Bill Copland Mackie (left) trained unsuccessfully as a pilot of the RAF and later became an officer of an infantry regiment. Marjorie served as a nurse.*

*Forms of
transport
in the
1930s*



• Two photos (top) show that in the 1913s local personal transport for family members was mainly by a gig and horse, or by rickshaw. While (above) in the upcountry, heavy haulage of tea factory equipment still relied on primitive forms of transport.



• View of Galaha Factory in 1982 after Government takeover in 1975. In areas behind the factory the blister blight destroyed the tea plants and the land used for silk production by silkworms in parts of the factory. The twin peaks are called Dethanagala.



• Kath and Bill Mackie with Doraiswamy and two members of Galaha Factory staff in 1982. Doraiswamy was secretary/shorthand typist for my father Bill Mackie in 1927.



• Galaha manager's bungalow and garden in 1927



• Galaha bungalow and garden with young Bill and Jim, in front, playing beside the lily pond.

One day Jim fell into the pond, and young Bill grabbed his legs and called for help while Jim's head was under water and blowing bubbles.

Jim was duly rescued without mishap, but Bill Jr. was admonished for not letting go of Jim's legs so his head was out of the water. His response was 'But Mummy, you told me not to let him get his new shoes wet!'

James Taylor, regarded as the founder of Ceylon's tea industry, arrived in about 1852 at Loolecondera, then a coffee plantation where he became manager by 1857. With coffee-rust fungus killing off most coffee plantations, Taylor planted his first area of tea in 1867, then making his first saleable tea on his bungalow veranda. It is not clear in the literature when and where the first factory was built. Before nationalisation of foreign-owned

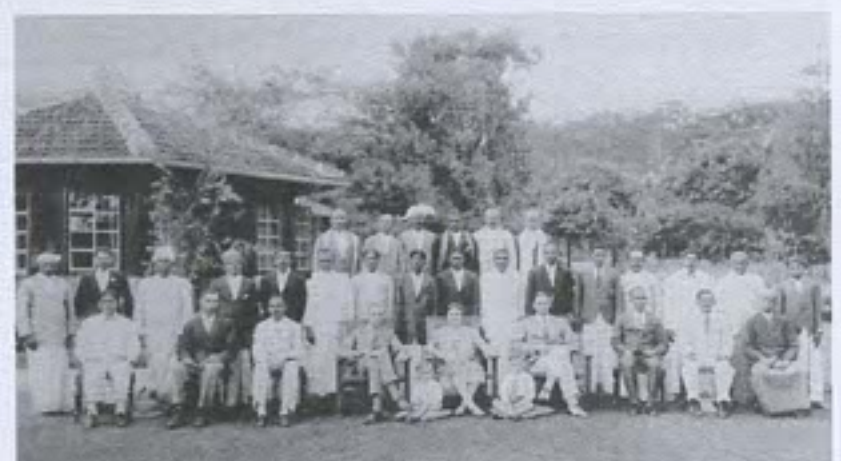
tea estates the Galaha bungalow had an attractive garden, as in this 1959 image, while in the Mackies' sojourn there was a nice lily pond and a nearby tennis court.



• Inside the factory's entrance was a notice installed in 1980 to celebrate the centenary of the factory's construction.

This claim as 'The first tea factory in the island' is difficult to reconcile with the history of Loolecondera Tea Estate, where in 1867 James Taylor began to replace a coffee plantation with tea plantings and to develop a facility for processing the leaf into a saleable product.

“ This assembly on Galaha Estate is perhaps indicative of parts of British colonial social structure.



• Staff of Galaha Estate Tea Factory assembled at Manager's bungalow garden in late 1927, before departure of Mackie family for Australia. Seated at centre, L- R: Alec Hudson, SD, Jim Mackie, Eileen Mackie, Bill Mackie Jr., Bill Mackie, PD; Seated on left of Bill Mackie is Ayaswamy, Chief Clerk, and behind him is Doraiswamy, shorthand typist/secretary for Bill Mackie.

This assembly on Galaha Estate is perhaps indicative of parts of the British colonial social structure.



• (Left) In strong contrast to the previous image were the living conditions in most 'coolie lines', where indentured Tamil labourers

from India and their families lived in single rooms per family, and for all occupants one tap for water outside the building and a single toilet facility under the ventilator pipe above the roof. This photo was taken by Bill Mackie on another tea estate in 1959, where accommodation conditions may have been slightly better than earlier in the century.



• (Above) During my 1982 visit to Sri Lanka, I was taken to the 1500 acre Bandarapola State Plantation where S.I.D. Swamy, son of Doraiswamy and an agricultural graduate of Peradeniya University, was on his own initiative renovating the rather derelict old coolie lines by joining four single rooms into one family unit.



• In the plantations the male coolies undertake the heavy tasks. Photo taken by Bill Mackie in about 1916 on Waldemar Estate.



• Image from Bill Mackie's album of female coolies planting tea seeds into germinating beds in about 1916 on Waldemar Estate.



• Male coolies are here constructing propagation beds for growing new tea plants.



• A 1982 view of plucking the tea - the most commonly observed task for female labour.



• Picking over tea prior to packaging, employs females in the factory.

• Mail delivery. Another 1916 vintage photo from Bill Mackie's album.



I have had no contact with Sri Lanka since 1982 so I am unable to report on recent labour conditions on tea estates, which have since been largely returned to corporate ownership.

I understand that in recent times all 'plantation Tamils' have been able to gain full citizenship.



March 2019 marked the 100th anniversary of a hallmark in the history of Sri Lanka- the signing of the Kandyan Convention in 1815 by Governor Robert Brownrigg and the Kandyan Chiefs. The occasion was remembered in various ways. At the Peradeniya University, Dr Kohona addressed a large gathering on 2 March. This is the complete text of Dr Kohona's talk.

The Kandyan Convention – did we have a better option?

by Dr. Palitha Kohona *(Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and Foreign Secretary; and former Head of UN Treaty Section.)*

On March 2nd, we recalled a momentous event that occurred 200 years ago that resulted in the loss of Lanka's sovereignty to the mightiest empire, the empire on which the sun never set, that the world had known up to that time. Lanka had remained unbowed for over 2300 years. Although we rose up in rebellion three years later, it was a heroic but unequal struggle with a much more powerful and vengeful colonial power which had also through unscrupulous manipulation succeeded in fracturing the unity of the Kandyan people, encouraged factions suspicious of each other and diluted the centuries old bonds that bound the Kingdom together. Having gained access to the mountain fastness of the Kingdom, it had also cleverly positioned itself and the boundless resources of its vast empire to snuff out any effort to regain our freedom which we had lost recently.

The Kandyan uprising may have had some hope of success at certain times but the odds were weighted too unequally and the desperate struggle of our ancestors ended in failure. In the words of Tibetan, Mahinda Thero, "The Independent Crown Which Was Ours for Two Thousand Years, Was Now No Longer Ours". Britain, which had through devious strategies taken over the control of the Kandyan Kingdom, and as it demonstrated time and again in different parts of the world, perfidiously breached the solemn commitments that it undertook by treaty, causing the sparks that inflamed the Kandyan highlands and proceeded to entrench itself in Lanka for 133 years before leaving, following the debilitation experienced in the Second World War.

In 2016, the Government of Sri Lanka pardoned posthumously, those who rose up to regain the independence of the country 200 years ago and who had been branded as traitors to the British crown. 101 names appear on that incomplete honour roll. In reality, 778 rebel leaders were either executed, imprisoned or banished from the country, for challenging the British crown. Their ancestral lands were confiscated and the owners were debarred from returning to them in perpetuity, forcing them to seek refuge in distant and inaccessible parts of the Kingdom. The villagers who had worked on those lands suffered summary evictions and were forced to labour on military road building projects. Vast acreages were later given to those who chose pliantly to serve the colonial master or British plantation companies.

Even the records left by the colonial administrators themselves indicate that during the uprising, thousands were slaughtered by the British forces, houses and crops were torched, women raped, children orphaned, temples looted and most of the Kandyan countryside devastated. Britain was to repeat this ignominious performance many times in other parts of the world before it belatedly discovered human rights.

The people rose up again in 1848 against the colonial power. But on that occasion, the uprising was quelled much more rapidly by an occupier who, by this time, was much more solidly entrenched in the country. Though smaller uprisings occurred in 1820, 1823, 1824, and 1828, none of them seriously threatened the British control of the highlands.

The many circumstances that led to the great Kandyan uprising of 1817-1818 need to be analysed to separate myth from reality, truth from convenient propaganda, including cheap and uninformed political sloganeering and to understand why the Kandyan masses, led by their chiefs, rose up against the British in 1817 and why the British were successful in suppressing them.

First, a comment on the factors that contributed to the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom. Despite the many assertions made to explain the fall of the Kingdom to the British in 1815, there are a number of incontrovertible facts that tend to get blurred in the search for catchy slogans and easy analyses.

It is a fact that Kandy valiantly withstood the efforts of two contemporary world powers to conquer it for over two centuries and paid a massive price in men, resources and social coherence. By the early 19th Century, it was an utterly exhausted kingdom, a fruit ready to be plucked by a strong empire. The Kandyan aristocracy, which tends to be conveniently vilified through ignorance or for political advantage, provided the leadership to the people against the foreign invaders on all those occasions, without exception. They led the village militias in building defences, armed them, provided the leadership and protected the King and religion. On occasion, it was the Kandyan leaders who ventured to the foreign dominated lowlands to harry the occupiers and even to negotiate with them.

While the Kingdom of Kotte in the western coastal lowlands, and Jaffna in the north of Lanka fell under the domination of the Portuguese during the

16th Century, and the populations were quickly subjugated, in particular through proselytisation, Kandy emerged as the proud bastion of Sinhala independence. Sitawaka collapsed totally after the death of warrior king Rajasinha I in 1592. There was not much resistance in the lowlands to the foreign occupiers after that.

The Kandyan Kingdom, commonly referred as the "Sinhale", since the first attempt of the Portuguese to control it in 1591, valiantly resisted repeated attempts of the Portuguese, the Dutch and initially the British, to conquer it, at great cost to itself and even greater cost to the invaders. The Europeans were, all in their day, the super powers of the world. It is important to note that in a supreme act of arrogance, the Portuguese and the Spanish had even divided up the newly discovered lands of the world to which their ships had sailed under the Treaty of Tordesillas, (June 7, 1494), which had the blessings of the Spanish-born Pope Alexander VI.

Portuguese ambitions to completely subjugate Sri Lanka were comprehensively thwarted by a Kandyan prince in 1591. The Portuguese, who were well established in the Kotte Kingdom by this time, sought to consolidate their power over the whole country by invading Kandy to enthrone their protégé, Yamasingha Bandara, baptised as Dom Philipe, the heir of the dispossessed ruler of Kandy, the late Karaliyadde Bandara. The invading force was accompanied by a Sinhala nobleman, Konnappu Bandara, who had spent much of his youth in Goa under Portuguese protection and acquired western skills. Konnappu Bandara, baptised as Dom Joao de Austria, dressed in Portuguese attire, (a contemporary wood cut of his meeting with Joris van Spielberg aan in 1602 is on display in the Reijks Museum, Amsterdam), spoke Portuguese, had acquired Western military skills and demonstrated more than a passing familiarity with Western culture, having been influenced by the missionaries. Dom Philipe was installed as King by the Portuguese but died under suspicious circumstances, and Konnappu Bandara, to their surprise, enthroned himself with the assistance of the Kandyan chiefs who were searching for a Sinhala royal to take over the throne, adopting the regal name of Wimala Dharma Surya. Many times in the ensuing two centuries, the chiefs coordinated among themselves to install men with royal blood on the Kandyan throne and this desire was evident even when they decided to depose the last king, Nayakkar from South India whom they had come to despise. Subsequently, in 1594, the Portuguese invaded again and attempted to crown Karaliyadde Bandara's daughter, Kusumasana Devi, baptized as Dona Catherina after Queen Catherine of Austria, as the empress of Kandy and were soundly beaten by Wimala Dharma Suriya's forces. They had even planned to marry her to a nephew of the Portuguese

Conquistador in Sri Lanka, Captain-General Pedro Lopes de Sousa.

Wimala Dharma Suriya, whose forces had captured Dona Catharina, married her to consolidate his power. He also reverted to the traditional faith of the people, Buddhism. He resuscitated Buddhism in the Kandyan Kingdom by inviting learned monks from Burma who re-established the ordination ceremony. Many commentators believe that had he not done so, Buddhism would probably have disappeared from Lanka due to relentless Christian missionary activity.

While the Portuguese were brutally persecuting the Buddhists and destroying their temples in the lowlands, under the Kandyan kings non-Buddhist religions were treated with respect. It is likely that Dona Catherina remained a Catholic till her death. The Muslims, ruthlessly persecuted by the Portuguese, sought refuge under the King of Kandy. Kandyan villages such as Akurana, Gampola, Ruwanwella and Batticaloa are still Muslim dominated as a result. Later when the Catholics faced persecution under the Dutch, the King granted them protection. Wahakotte is still a Catholic dominated village near Monerawila, Pallepola and Ehelepola in a sea of Buddhists.

A prolonged period of warfare with the Portuguese, lasting over 70 years, ensued with the Portuguese persisting in their efforts to conquer Kandy and the Kandyans routing the invader repeatedly. In the face of the colonial assaults, successive kings, the chiefs and the people of the Kandyan kingdom were forced to defend their highland home time and time again for the next 215 years. A task which they accomplished with incredible success despite not having a large standing army, being a small population and possessing relatively meagre resources. They used the mountainous terrain of their kingdom to maximum advantage, perfected military tactics that were unfamiliar to the European invaders and even copied and mastered the weapons that the Europeans had introduced. Their audacious endurance and commitment, ingrained by a fierce sense of national identity, surprised the invaders. In 1841, British Lieutenant De Butts noted that the 'physiognomy of the mountaineers is influenced by the bold scenery amid which they reside, and which is supposed to impart somewhat of hardiesse to their manners and aspect.' This physiognomic difference was said to map on to a divergence in character, evident in the 'servility' and 'effeminate' nature of the lowlanders, which contrasted with the elevated manliness of the highlanders. Trying to find a reason for the 1803 defeat, Robert Percival observed that the inaccessibility of the interior rendered the lines of Kandyan character more bold and prominent in contrast with the subjection and tranquillity of the lowlanders.

But the incessant warfare and Portuguese depredations decimated the population, especially the male population, damaged the system of agriculture and disrupted the social fabric. As contemporary writings suggest, poverty and deprivation were common in the Kandyan kingdom but this did not prevent the average villager from picking up his arms and bravely advancing at the behest of their king and chiefs to confront the European invaders time and time again. On occasion, Kandyan victories were nothing but spectacular. The surprising thing is not that the Kandyans held out but that they managed to do so with astounding success for over 200 years. One could attribute this in large measure to a fierce sense of national pride and loyalty to the King, their land, their religion and their chiefs.

A period of fending off the Dutch who had succeeded the Portuguese ensued. Although, the Dutch who were more interested in trade rather than territorial acquisitions and religious conversions, were lesser marauders than the Portuguese.

The British ousted the Dutch from Lanka. They had recently defeated Napoleon's navy in the Battle of the Nile and were beginning to control vast areas of India. Supremely confident of their own superiority, they sought to ensure that the entire Island of Ceylon was firmly under their control mainly for strategic reasons. This became a clear policy goal of Britain's expanding empire. The existence of a small independent kingdom in the middle of the country was causing them additional expense and could be exploited by a competing power at some point. It was an irritant that had to be snuffed out.

Before long, they began to do what their European predecessors had been doing unsuccessfully for 200 years. Governor North even suggested the creation of a protectorate with a British regiment stationed in Kandy, but this proposal was rejected by the Kandyan chiefs who remained loyal to their King. The first major British invasion of Kandy suffered the same fate as those of the Portuguese and the Dutch. The King commanded the loyalty of the chiefs, the people and the monks and the invaders were massacred at Le Wella (Bloody Beach) but the world's only superpower at the time did not take this defeat lying down. A follow-up incursion suffered defeat also.

Despite the success against the first British invasion, there is little doubt that the Kandyan Kingdom was in a state of acute fatigue and the inevitable challenge to its independence from the British Empire would be impossible to resist. Britain's agents, in furthering the policy of subjugating Kandy, astutely identified the reasons for Kandy's success in the past and worked towards methodically neutralising them. They adopted a strategy of conquering through a firm embrace, and were surprisingly successful. As a consequence the second

invasion in 1815 produced an easy prize for Britain and Kandy, the last hold-out of the Sinhala people, fell without much resistance.

First, recognising that the key strength of Kandy lay in the unity of the people, the chiefs, the monks and the King, the British set about demonising the King and gradually splitting him from the chiefs, the people and the monks. These were the three traditional pillars on which power of the King and the integrity of the kingdom rested. Then they exploited the differences among the chiefs. The parallels of these events 200 years ago with events unfolding today are difficult to ignore.

The King himself probably became an unwitting accessory to this devious plan and undertook actions that lost him the confidence of the chiefs, the monks and the people. It has been suggested that he became an addict to alcohol, probably supplied by foreign agents. Incensed by rumours of disloyalty and without much investigation, he attempted to take the First Adigar Ehelepola into custody. It has been speculated that Ehelepola wished to place a Sinhala royal (himself?) on the throne. Ehelepola fled to the lowlands for his own safety. The King then executed 47 chiefs from Sabaragamuwa who were suspected of being loyal to Ehelepola and put to death his entire family in gruesome ways, causing widespread outrage. The British, in Colombo, exploited these incidents to maximum effect and publicised them widely. The gruesome deaths of the Ehelepola family and the Sabaragamuwa chiefs shocked the Kandyan aristocracy and the people whose loyalty could no longer be taken for granted and segments of the Kingdom now revolted, only to be suppressed cruelly. There was also widespread resentment among the chiefs and the people of the large contingent of relatives and retainers who had accompanied the King's Nayakkar wives who were becoming a heavy burden on the public purse. They also habitually made excessive demands of the people and the chiefs which aggravated the situation.

John D'Oyly Esqr, (later Sir John D'Oyly), a committed genius on his majesty's civil service to some, but a supremely devious manipulator to others, (a role surprisingly similar to the one later played by T. E. Lawrence of Arabia to dismember the Ottoman Empire and the domination of the Middle East by Britain) had inveigled himself in to the confidence of a number of senior Kandyan chiefs. He correctly advised Governor Brownrigg that Kandy's nobles were ready to cooperate with any British attempt at dislodging their despised King, Sri Wikrama Rajasinghe. D'Oyly appeared to possess the key to the conquest that had so far eluded previous European invaders – a profound insight into the soul of the Kandyans, possibly facilitated by his fluency in Sinhala. Circumstance after circumstance ensured that the cherished freedom of the Sinhala people

would be snuffed out by the emerging global super power, Britain.

The King's troops, providing a convenient excuse, crossed the British-Kandyan border pursuing Ehelepola, and attacked the British garrison at Sitawaka - of itself enough provocation for Brownrigg to dispatch a force to Kandy. The situation was aggravated by the return of a group of Muslim traders, British subjects, mutilated on the orders of Sri Wikrama Rajasingha at Hanguranketha. It has been suggested that they were British agents, and many Muslim traders did provide the British with valuable intelligence.

With the King having antagonised the Kandyan chiefs through his own cruelties and the behaviour of his wives' relatives, the monks disenchanted with the monarch, the people loathing their royal lord and his in-laws and the citizen militia not being ready to man the passes as usual, the background for the capture of the kingdom and the King was well orchestrated. D'Oyley had arranged for the chiefs and the militias that they commanded to not oppose the invading British forces, which, after all, were only purporting to replace a detested King. The British, advancing in a number of columns, met hardly any resistance and entered Kandy on the 10th of February, 1815, accompanied by John D'Oyly. A jubilant Brownrigg informed the Admiralty "Let by the invitation of the chiefs and welcomed by the acclamations of the people, the forces of His Britannic Majesty, have entered the Kandyan territory and penetrated to the capital. Divine Providence has blessed their efforts with uniform success and complete victory. The ruler of the interior provinces has fallen into their hands and the government remains at the disposal of His Majesty's Representative". Sri Wikrama Rajasinghe was captured and was exiled with his harem, to Vellore Fort in India, where he died 17 years later. His son, and potential heir, died childless in 1842.

Brownrigg proceeded to sign the much debated Kandyan Convention with the chiefs. The Convention was concluded in March 1815 following negotiations between John D'Oyly and the Kandyan chiefs. It would appear now that D'Oyly had to hawk the draft convention from one chief to another to obtain their signatures, suggesting that certain chiefs may have been reluctant to sign. This effort took days. In the absence of the King, the chiefs had to be party to the Convention as they now represented the only remaining power base in the Kandyan Kingdom. Had they not been party to the Convention, the Kingdom could have vested with the British crown with not even the pretence of the safeguards incorporated in the Convention. Amazingly, even with mighty Britain seeking to impose its will, the chiefs ensured that the Kandyan Convention contained extensive

safeguards for Buddhism, the chiefs themselves and the prevailing legal order.

The King having fallen in to British hands and the British troops well established in strategic locations, one wonders why there was even a need for the Convention. There is no doubt that the British required the guarantee of the Convention to reassure the Chiefs whom they believed could disturb their relatively easy acquisition. They were aware of the fate of previous colonial expeditions to Kandy. Impressively, the Chiefs for their part, extracted much more safeguards from the British than would have been possible in the event of an outright military defeat. In essence, the Convention assured the continuity of the Kandyan Kingdom in its existing form except for the replacement of the King with the Sovereign of the United Kingdom. Some of the chiefs, including Ehelepola, appear to have entertained the far reaching goal of using the British to rid the Kingdom of the hated Nayakkar King and thereafter placing a Sinhala royal on the throne. It is to the credit of the Kandyan chiefs that they managed to negotiate such an outcome with the undoubted super power of the world that could have imposed its will on the tiny Kingdom that they had just occupied.

The Convention is also unique in many ways. It represents the voluntary transference of authority in Kandy to George III of Britain, and indeed later events showed that the Kandyan nobility did hope that they were simply replacing one master whom they detested (the Nayakkar) with another from far away (George III). The British intentions and the Kandyan aspirations were not the same and Britain did not reveal its hand until after the kingdom was well under its control. Indeed, Ehelepola appears to have hoped that the new master would not be the British at all, but himself, a Sinhala noble with a genuine claim to the throne.

The essential points of the agreement were: 1. 'Sri Wickrema Rajasinha', the 'Malabar' king, would forfeit all claims to the throne of Kandy. 2. The dominion is vested in the sovereign of the British Empire, to be exercised through colonial governors, except in the case of the Adikarams, Disavas, Mohot-talas, Korales, Vidanes and other subordinate officers reserving the rights, privileges and powers within their respective ranks. 3. The religion of the Buddha was declared inviolable and its rights were to be maintained and protected. 4. All civil and criminal justice over the Kandyan territory was to be administered according to the established norms and customs of the country, the government reserving to itself the rights of interposition when and where necessary.

The Chiefs and the Buddhist hierarchy were adamant that the Kandyan Convention afforded exceptional protection to Buddhism, one of the key pillars of the Sinhala people. (Contrary to these

expectations, less than thirty years later, in 1843, the British had constructed St Paul's Church within the sacred precinct of the Temple of the Tooth Relic. It was consecrated by Bishop James Chapman who was also the first Warden of S. Thomas' College, then in Mutwal. Curiously, George III, the defender of the faith (Christian) committed himself to protect the religion of the Buddha. This was a treaty commitment and has never been formally abrogated by the British crown. Later in 1815, confirming this commitment, the heads of the premier Buddhist monasteries at Malwatte and Asgiriya, both met Governor Brownrigg and extracted guarantees that the position of Buddhism would not be compromised. This included a commitment not to encourage proselytisation or construct mission schools. (But Trinity College, Kandy, established to proselytise Kandyan noble children, was constructed on Temple property despite this commitment). The Convention also committed the British to protect the norms and customs of the country, thereby ensuring the continuance of the customs and practises of the people. These were more the clauses of a treaty between equals than a victor's conditions imposed on a vanquished. Britain, once established securely, of course, did not honour its solemn commitments.

As to whether Kandy could have managed to hold the British at bay for much longer or extract much more from the British in the negotiations at that point in history is highly debatable. My view is that for a leadership which was not much familiar with the momentous events shaping the future of the world and Britain emerging as the undisputed global super power, the chiefs did remarkably well. They had certain objectives and had them reflected in the Convention. They sought to protect the position of Buddhism in the Kingdom, and safeguard the existing legal framework while accepting the need for ridding the country of the despised Nayakkar king, and possibly replacing him with a Sinhala royal. In their perception, the King had become a tyrant, and replacing him with another foreigner from a distant land in the near term was their soft option.

The British who concluded similar agreements elsewhere (Waitangi in New Zealand, in Bechanaland, etc.), very quickly and perfidiously breached their solemn promises. The breach of the Waitangi Treaty of 1840 was to result in the Maori Wars in 1845 which lasted till 1870. The consequences were roughly the same as those that followed the Kandyan uprising. Thousands of Maoris were killed and dispossessed and over 16,000 square kilometres of their land confiscated. The story in the Southern African highlands was not too dissimilar and the struggle to recover the lands illegally possessed by the colonialists continues. The more recent gory history of the Kenyan highlands is no different and a sad indictment of the British.

Dissatisfaction with the British began to simmer almost immediately. The chiefs who signed the Convention in their enthusiasm to rid themselves of the Nayakkar King, and, some to advance their own interests, began to entertain doubts about the wisdom of what they had done. As records of their actual feelings and machinations are not available, it is difficult to gauge what they were actually going through. Perhaps self-doubt would have crept into their thinking. The proud history of resistance so easily sacrificed may have begun to torture their souls. The British very quickly began to display their disregard for the Convention and the people's expectations and this irked the leaders, the monks and the people even more. The Kandyans were used to being ruled by a king who, historically, had moved with them at various social, cultural and religious occasions (at least initially) and they had even entertained the possibility of a Sinhala claimant taking over the throne.

The new overlord and his representatives did not live up to their expectations. Hence, resentment grew as they felt that they were being neglected, unwanted and brutally exploited in the course of day to day administration and governance by the strangers from distant Europe. In addition, the coercion of indigenous labour mobilised for public works aggravated the resentment and has remained in the Kandyan psyche to this day. Governor Gordon wrote later, "...in the Candian provinces, from ten years of age, the men may be three months of the year in requisition, working under the white task master's lash..." Lieutenant De Butts wrote "dragged from their homes to toil in a service for which they received no sort of remuneration, the Cingalese in many instances failed, from actual inanition and died at the feet of their Christian task masters..." But the troops of the Empire were now well established at strategic locations of the Kandyan Kingdom and the dissension that D'Oyly so carefully nurtured among the chiefs festered.

The aristocracy and the Buddhist priests were accustomed to receiving respect from persons who interacted with them. However, since the British rule, even a common British soldier would pass by a Kandyan chief paying hardly any attention as he would to anybody else. The disrespect demonstrated by the British annoyed the chiefs. These factors sowed the seeds of the 1818 uprising.

More Shavian cracks

- Home life as we understand it is no more natural to us than a cage is natural to a cockatoo.
- What God hath joined together no man shall ever put asunder: God will take care of that.

Bernard Shaw - Getting Married (1911)

Final instalment

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF CLASSICAL WRITERS AND HISTORIANS WHO WROTE ON SRI LANKA

Strabo (1st Century BC)

Strabo, the Amasian stoic and geographer during Augustus Caesar's time, was the son of wealthy parents. He was Greek by language and education. In his youth he studied under the rhetorician Aristodemus at Nysa in Caria, and he may also have known the Stoic polymath Posidonius. In about 44 BC he went to Rome to study with the geographer Tyrannion and the philosopher Xenarchus. He became a convert to Stoicism, probably through the offices of the philosopher Athenodorus Cananites, the friend and teacher of the emperor Augustus, although he continued to distrust popular religion (however useful it might be) and to believe in Providence as a first cause.

An admirer of the Roman Empire, Strabo may have been politically motivated in the writing of his works, although they also contain a great deal of knowledge presented for its own sake. Of these works, only one, the *Geographica*, is extant. It is known that Strabo composed a number of historical works, including a *Hypomnemata historica* in which he recounted incidents in the lives of famous men. He intended a fuller work, incorporating some of the same material, to be a continuation of the work of Polybius, whose history concluded with the years 146/145 BC. Strabo's work appeared in either forty-three or forty-seven books, and brought Polybius up to date at least as far as the troubles following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC.

Strabo apparently published some of his surviving *Geographica* about 7 BC; a partially revised version of this appeared in about A.D. 18, and a finished but still incompletely revised work in seventeen books was published later, perhaps after Strabo's death. The first two books of the *Geographica* contain a somewhat rambling but still useful survey of earlier geographic theories and serve as an introduction to the rest of the work, wherein Strabo attempted to set out an account of the physical features, products, and national character of each country. His presentation is characteristically mathematical, chorographical, topographical, physical, political, and historical. He was of course dealing with the known world, at a time when much of northern Europe and of Africa south of the Mediterranean coastal regions and Egypt were still unexplored, while Asia was known only as far as India and Ceylon. Strabo had discovered the Island (Ceylon) to be as large as Britain, and hence believed that this was a more closer interpretation. He had also referred to *Taprobane* as supplying the Indian markets with large quantities of ivory, tortoise shells and other commodities.

By M. Asoka T. De Silva



Tennent, James Emerson (1859)

Sir James Emerson Tennent arrived in the Island as Colonial Secretary of the Ceylon Government in 1845. Although he had expected to succeed Governor Sir Collin Campbell, as the Chief Administrator of the Island, his ambition was never realized, and Tennent remained as Colonial Secretary till 1850. This removal from this post had been controversial, as it followed an inquiry over the riots of 1848. He, however, subsequently became an administrator of the British Government.

Tennent's stay had apparently not been peaceful, being a victim of what had been referred to as the "Family Compact", (domination by a clique of members of one extended family), which held sway in decision-making. Opposition to his work first came with the need to demolish encroachments in the old Pettah area, which during that period was a prestigious residential area with houses provided with large airy verandahs.

Tennent's historical work on Ceylon was reported in two volumes titled '*Ceylon - An Account of the Island: Physical, Historical and Topographical*'. It has been said that Tennent as a historian towered high above those of the era.



• Sir James Emerson Tennent.

His perceptions had been more sensitive, his understanding deeper, and style more polished. He was bewildered by the beauty of the Island, when he stated that - "from wherever direction, it is approached, unfolds a scene of loveliness and grandeur unsurpassed, if it be rivaled by any land in the universe" (Ref: K.M.De Silva, *J. Royal Asiatic*

Society of Sri Lanka. Sesquicentennial Memorial Lecture, 1995-1996, 1998. Some of the characteristic comments of Tennent (1859) about Ceylon in his two - volume treatise have been quoted by other writers. These include the following:

----- *There is no country in the world, Great Britain itself not excepted, that has attracted the attention of authors in so many different countries as Ceylon* (page a 2).

----- Ceylon from whatever direction it is approached, unfolds a scene of loveliness and grandeur unsurpassed, if it be rivaled, by any land in the universe (page b-2).

----- Nothing is more strikingly suggestive of the extended renown of Ceylon and of the different countries which maintained an intercourse with the Island, than the number and dissimilarity of the names by which it has been known at various periods throughout Europe and Asia (page 525).

George Turnour (1799 – 1843)

George Turnour was the eldest son of the Hon. George Turnour, son of the first Earl of Winterton; his mother being Emilie, niece of the Cardinal Duc de Beausset. Turnour was born in Ceylon in 1799, and was educated in England under the guidance of the Right Hon. Sir Thomas Maitland, the Governor of the island. He entered the civil service in 1818, in which he rose to the highest rank. He was distinguished equally by his abilities and his modest display of them. As a public officer acquiring a knowledge of the native languages, he extended his studies from the vernacular and written Sinhalese to Pali, the great root and original of both, and known only to the Buddhist clergy. There were no dictionaries to assist in defining the Pali terms which no teacher could be found capable of rendering into English, so that Turnour was entirely depended on his knowledge of Sinhalese as a medium for translating them.

Sir James Emerson Tennent 1859) in his celebrated publication, "Ceylon: An Account of the Island" states that, "It was not until the year 1826 that the discovery was made (by Turnour), and communicated to Europe, that whilst the history of India was only to be conjectured from myths and elaborated from the dates on copper grants, or fading inscriptions on rocks and columns, Ceylon was in possession of continuous written chronicles rich in authentic facts, and not only presenting a continuous history of the island itself, but also yielding valuable material for elucidating that of India".

Turnour was by then administering the District of Saffragam (Sabaragamuwa), and being resident in Ratnapoora (Ratnapura), he was able to pursue his studies under the guidance of Gallé, a learned priest, through whose instrumentality he obtained from the Vihare at Mulgiri-galla (Mulkirigala) (a temple founded about 130 years before the Christian Era), some rare and important manuscripts, the perusal of which gave an impulse and direction to the investigation which occupied the rest of his life. *Mahawanso* (*Mahawansa*), a metrical chronicle, containing a dynastic history of the island for 23 centuries from 543 BC. to 1758 AD, being written in Pali verse, its existence in modern times was only known to the priests, and owing to the obscurity of its diction, it had ceased to be studied by even the learned among them.

Turnour undertook with confidence, a translation into English of the long lost chronicle, and thus vindicated the claim of Ceylon to the possession of our authentic and unrivalled record of its national history. Turnour, in addition to many elaborate contributions drawn from the recesses of Pali learning in elucidation of the chronology of India, was able to prepare an "Epitome of the History of Ceylon" in which he has exhibited the succession and genealogy of 165 kings who filled the throne during 2341 years extending from the year 543 BC to the conquest by the British in 1798.

Whilst engaged in the translation of the *Mahawansa*, Turnour, amongst other able papers on "Buddhist History and Indian Chronology" in the Journal of the Bengal Asiatic Society, contributed a series of essays on the "Pali-Buddhistical Annals", which were published in this journal between 1836 and 1838. Although Turnour had planned to undertake several other translations, with shattered health returned to Europe in 1842 and died at Naples on the 10th of April in 1843.

The first volume of his translation of the *Mahawansa*, which contained 38 chapters out of the 100 which formed the original work, was published in Colombo in 1837, and apprehensive that skepticism might assail the authenticity of a discovery so important, he accompanied his English version with a reprint of the original Pali in Roman characters with diacritical points. He did not live to conclude the task he had so nobly begun; he died while engaged on the second volume of his translation.



Have a swing in Sri Lanka?

Very little is relatively known about golf in Sri Lanka. However, the country can boast of three of the finest 18-hole courses in Asia. It might be surprising, also, to learn that Sri Lanka has been associated with the game of golf for more than a century and the Sri Lanka Amateur Golf Championship, which was instituted in the year 1891, is the second oldest Golf Championship in the world after the British Amateur.

Sri Lanka, surprisingly, can boast of three of the finest 18-hole courses in Asia. The three courses are situated in Colombo, Digana and Nuwara Eliya with Colombo at sea level, Digana at 600 metres above and Nuwara Eliya at an elevation of 2070 metres and each has distinctly different terrain and climate conditions. This contributes to the enjoyment and challenge as you could be playing golf in three different countries.

Murders in the Vicarage: Mathew Pieris Case

Text of talk delivered at CSA quarterly Sydney meeting on 26 May 2019



by Ananda
Amaranath LLB

In the annals of legal history in Sri Lanka, perhaps in the world, few cases have decided the guilt or innocence of the accused based primarily on medical evidence.

The Murder of Eunice Peris and Russel Ingram by the introduction of the anti-diabetic drug, Euglucon, is perhaps the best example of case where the medical evidence played a pivotal role in the outcome of the trial.

Due to the manifest uncertainty about the cause of death, a galaxy of medical specialists in every conceivable field gave evidence at the trial.



• Alston Koch as Fr. Mathew Peiris with Sri Lankan star Jacqueline Fernandez playing Dalrene Ingram, in the award winning movie *According to Matthew*.

(Photo courtesy Wikipedia)

Rev. Mathew Pieris, the accused, was the son of Canon TCJ Pieris and Mrs Pieris and the eldest in family of six. He never had a desire to be a priest, but took up a correspondence course in Motor mechanics and acquired a British technical qualification as an associate member of the Institute of Motor trade. He was man of many parts and even had an interest in embroidery and on one occasion displayed his work at a 'Needlework and embroidery exhibition'.

In 1944, he married Eunice Pieris and had three children, Mihiri, Malrani and Munilal all of whom were in the United Kingdom at the time of these offences.

In 1950, Rev. Mathew suffered a serious illness thought to be brain tumour. He spent some six weeks in hospital and when lying in bed in anguish, he had a series visions where his godmother appeared said he would be healed by God and to seek

solace in the ministry. She apparently asked him to go to London via India and to exercise the power of exorcism. Rev. Mathew lived in an Ashram for a while in India, and it was there that decided he would never shave his beard or cut his hair.

In 1951 he went to London and enrolled in a College in Theology and was later ordained as a Priest by the Archbishop of Canterbury. He worked for while at the church of St Francis of Assisi at Welwyn Garden City and later Deacon in charge of St Mary Magdalene Church at Hatfield Hide on the eastern side of Welwyn Garden City.

Rev. Mathew returned to Sri Lanka in 1956 and in 1957 he was invited by Rev. Basil Jayawardena to be his assistant at St Pauls Church, Kynsey Road, Colombo. Rev. Jayawardena passed away suddenly of an undiagnosed illness and Rev. Mathew succeeded him as the vicar of the church.

Over a period, Rev. Mathew began to display a stigmata, resembling the wounds of Christ, which bled periodically. He became an internationally famed exorcist and travelled the world at the invitation of those who sought his perceived spiritual powers. He also became an interpreter of Psychic dreams and contributed to daily newspapers on the subject. Those who sought his services were not only the ill but those also who had family and marital problems and land disputes. Over the years he had dedicated religious services every Thursday night at St Paul's Church that drew large crowds. It is at these services that he performed exorcist ceremonies. He drove home the message of miraculous healing and got the congregation help the church. He instilled fear in his followers implying they would fall victim to serious illnesses. Several parishioners assisted Rev. Mathew in these ceremonies and looked in wonderment as people fell down unconscious during these ceremonies.

Russell and Dalrene Ingram

In 1976, at one of the Thursday night services Russell and Dalrene Ingram first met Rev. Mathew. Following the introduction, Mathew found a job for Russel at Lake House and offered a job to Dalrene as a secretary/cum typist. At the time Rev. Mathew was writing a book "Damn the bloody exorcist". Over a period, Dalrene became closely associated with Mathew and even commenced assisting him at the Thursday night exorcist ceremonies. This was the beginning of a series of events that finally resulted in the death of Russel Ingram and Eunice Pieris.

Death of Russell Ingram

It was in evidence, at the time, that Russel Ingram was very fit and active person who had boxed at Wesley College and played cricket and continued to do so until shortly before his demise.

Rev. Mathew and Eunice Pieris left Sri Lanka on a world tour in February 1978 leaving Russell and Dalrene to look after the Vicarage. At the time Russell was in good health.

Mathew Pieris returned to Sri Lanka on 25 April 1978 leaving Eunice Pieris with her daughter Mihiri in Wales. At the time Russell continued to be in good health. In late May 1978, Rev. Mathew met Dr. Dayasiri Fernando, a consultant surgeon, related to both Rev. Mathew and Eunice and sought an academic opinion about a patient in the Vicarage who has a reduced state of consciousness, associated with a loss of consciousness, change in blood sugar, sometimes low with behavioural disturbances. It is significant to note there was no one ill at the time in the Vicarage.

It is to be noted that Rev. Mathew was himself diabetic and was on the anti-diabetic drug Euglucon and had ready access to the drug.

Russel first fell ill on 09 June 1978. Mathew told Alex Ingram, Russel's father, that Russell was in a stupor and was being treated by Dr Lakshaman Weerasena. This was rejected by Dr Weerasena in his evidence. Dr Weerasena further went on to mention about the letter he issued to confirm the Stigmata.

Dr Weerasena was the family doctor of the Peiris family at the time. This was before any medical specialist had examined him. On 10 June 1978, Rev. Mathew was observed giving Russell four pills and a capsule soon after which Alex had seen Russell sweating, getting drowsy and disorientated.

On the same day, Alex Ingram also saw Rev. Mathew going into a trance. He was rubbing his stomach and uttering the words 'Pancreas, Pancreas'. Next day Rev. Mathew told Alex that he had a conversation with the Angels and that he had been given bad news – that there was a crisis in the Vicarage. It was common for Rev. Mathew to go into the trances and even his own children gave evidence of several instances they experienced such incidents. In one instance his daughter Malrani recalls upon her mother's return to Sri Lanka how she observed her father go into a trance and claim he had spoken to the Angels and said their mother had stomach ailment and this would be her last Christmas in the house. It appears this was an attempt to condition the minds of the victim and those around them to accept that the victim was, in fact, unwell.

Several witnesses who gave evidence said they believed Rev. Mathew had certain supernatural powers and that his powers brought relief to number of ill or disturbed persons. His children were asked whether they believed their father had these powers. They said at a point they thought he did but now they were not so sure.

On 24 June 1978, Russell became unconscious and was admitted to hospital by Alex on letter written by Dr PAP Joseph but issued without him seeing the patient. Russell was seen by Dr

Ruwanpathirana, a House officer at 2.30 pm. Rev. Mathew gave the doctor a history of the patient's abnormal behaviour periodically and once was unconscious for 20 hours. He said he knew the patient from almost his childhood. This conversation was recorded on the Bed Head Ticket (BHT). Rev. Mathew further said when dextrose was administered the patient became violent and homicidal! The treating doctor diagnosed it as a case of hypoglycaemic coma and ordered the infusion of 10 per cent dextrose drip to Russell. At this point Rev. Mathew flared up and said "Are you mad? Sugar is poison for him". The doctor replied "Are you trying to cause further brain damage?" Rev. Mathew had then remained silent. The dextrose drip was duly administered, and blood was taken for tests.

At 8 pm the patient regained consciousness. He spent a few days at Ward 44 and was transferred to the professorial Surgical Ward 18. He was discharged on 14 July 1978 with no further medication but to return for a Glucose Tolerance Test (GTT) and Barium meal on 26 July 1978.

On 18 July 1978, Ms Jackson, Dalrene's sister, had observed that Russel became unconscious after taking some pills with his afternoon tea given to him by Mathew Pieris. He started sweating and became unconscious and taken to the Surgical Ward on a letter issued by Dr Sheriffdeen, without examination. The doctor on duty ordered a blood and urine test for sugar and made tentative diagnosis of Hypoglycaemia. Shortly after the blood sugar report was delivered that read Russel had blood sugar reading of Nil. It meant there was no recordable blood sugar in the blood sample.

Russel had been in a prolonged state of Hypoglycaemia that caused irreparable brain damage from which he never recovered. He died on 10 August 1978.

At this time no foul play was suspected. Dr Sheriffdeen did a pathological post-mortem. He examined all the vital organs including the liver, pancreas, kidneys, hypothalamus and pituitary glands for tumours. None were found. He concluded the cause of the coma which Russell suffered was due to an unaccounted fall in blood sugar, depriving the brain of essential nutrients. He concluded Hypoglycaemia was cause of Russell's coma in July and August 1978.

At this stage it is necessary to explain what Hypoglycaemia is. Dr Nagaratnam, a senior Physician at the General hospital gave evidence and explained. It is not proposed go into his evidence at length save to say that that blood sugar maintained in the body at certain normal level and is measurable at usually within a scale of 60 to 100 mg per 100 ml. but the figure is slightly variable depending on the scale of measurement. The blood sugar in the form of glucose is essential nutrients feeding the brain cells. When the blood sugar falls below 30-40 per 100 ml.

unconsciousness can occur. When there is a fall in blood sugar level certain signs appear. It could affect the person's alertness, consciousness depending on the rate of reduction of the blood sugar. According Dr Nagaratnam, the first symptoms could be lethargy, giddiness and dizziness, sweating, palpitation, slurring of speech, tremors, aggressiveness or violent behaviour. When the hypoglycaemia is prolonged, brain cells deprived of glucose get damaged and become irreversible and would then causes death due to other complications.

The cause of Hypoglycaemia can be two-fold. Endogenous and exogenous. Endogenous involves disorders in other human organs that could cause hypoglycaemia. Amongst the other causes is an Insulinoma or an Islet cell tumour in the beta cell of the pancreas or its ectopic tissues that excrete large amount of Insulin to over come any infusion of dextrose.

Unnatural causes would involve medical hypoglycaemia e.g. accidental overdose or a factitious hypoglycaemia which involves intentional giving of anti-diabetic drug or insulin to a person who is not a diabetic. The Prosecution in this case alleged the latter.

The defence claimed the prosecution has not proved beyond doubt that endogenous cause was not the cause of the coma resulting in the deaths of Russell Ingram and Eunice Pieris.

Mathew Pieris was a diabetic and had access to the anti-diabetic drug Euglicon. Munilal said he bought 100 tablets of the drug in Wales and he had bought 50 tablets from Osusala on a regular basis. He was familiar with purpose of the drug also had the book 'Body Mind and Sugar' in his residence.

Death of Eunice Pieris

Eunice Pieris returned to Sri Lanka from UK on 06 December 1978.

It is in evidence that her mood was low upon her return and she was treated for anxiety and depression with drug Stelazine and Artane. It was alleged by the defence that she was depressed because of the way she was treated by Mihiri in Cardiff and the breakdown of the marriage proposal for her daughter Malrani.

On 15 January 1979 Eunice Pieris was hospitalised at Durdans and seen by Dr Sathanandan, a Psychiatrist, who diagnosed her with endogenous reactive depression and treated her with Tofranil. She recovered fully and was discharged from hospital on 20 January 1979 with the direction that she continues the prescribed medication for another two months. On the 24 January 1979 she was examined by Dr E V Pieris who noted that she was unkempt, hair uncombed, unlike her previous self. He ordered an GTT to determine in her blood sugar level. On 29 January 1979 Eunice was subject to a GTT at Glass House by Rev Mathew. The results were

not shown to Dr Weerasena or Dr EV Pieris. Dr Weerasena visited the Vicarage at the request of Rev. Mathew on 30 January 1979 but did not see the results. He was told of the results the next day. He told Weerasena that 2-3 hours after taking sugar Eunice felt giddy. Eunice was admitted to hospital on 31 January 1979. The GTT results were consistent with reactive hypoglycaemia.

Rev Mathew previously told Dr E V Pieris that Eunice Pieris had blackouts and collapsed sweating on 17 December 1978 and on 31 December 1978. However, no medical attention was given. Upon Eunice's admission to Hospital on 31 December 1979, a house officer named Dr Terence De Silva examined her and the GTT report was shown to him by Mathew along with a letter to Dr. Weerasena by Dr EV Pieris. He noted the blood pressure to be 60/40 which was Low and blood sugar 30 mg per 100 ml. He took blood and urine for testing. He then asked Mathew whether she has taken any anti-diabetic drug in view of the GTT of 29 January 1979. Mathew denied it. Mathew gave the doctor a history of the patient going bad after infusion of dextrose. He advised the doctor not to give her dextrose and that she was being treated for depression. Notwithstanding that, Dr De Silva gave her an infusion of dextrose. The later blood sugar result showed the blood sugar had risen to 82 mg per 100 ml.. Her blood sugar never dropped following that, until she passed away on 19 March 1979.

Upon her admission to the hospital and following her examination, Dr De Silva spoke about her condition with colleagues during the lunch break. He mentioned that a year ago, a priest had admitted another patient with similar illness, and this gave cause for some concern. This information was conveyed to the superiors and a decision was made to move Eunice's bed closer to the nurses table and the BHT ticket was marked suspected poisoning, inform police, Hypoglycaemic agent, attempted suicide, homicide. No visitors were allowed near Eunice's bed. Following this, police was informed.

In March 1979, Dr JGC Peris who was resident in the UK came to Sri Lanka in March 1979 to attend the Centennial of the Royal- Thomian cricket match. He had been Rev. Mathew's GP before he left Sri Lanka. On meeting him, Rev Mathew gave him a medical history of Eunice from which he provided a theoretical diagnosis of Hypoglycaemia. Mathew asked Pieris to give him a letter stating that Eunice was highly depressed and that she was a hypochondriac. He said he would get a lawyer to draft the letter and provide it for his signature. Dr Pieris said he was not prepared to give such a letter without seeing the patient and avoided any contact with him until he returned to UK.

As the cause of death of Eunice Pieris could not be certified, an inquest was ordered and judicial

post-mortem performed. The JMO Dr Subramaniam certified the cause of death as Pneumonia in both lungs with diffused brain damage. He ruled out endogenous cause for the coma, leading to the death. He not only examined the vital organs but did histology on some of the vital organs including the pancreas and the surrounds to rule out any endogenous causes like pancreatic disease, Hyperplasia, adenomatosis, insulinomas, tumours and nesidioblastosis. Dr Nagaratnam agreed with the JMO's findings. He concluded the final cause of death was the result of the patient being in a prolonged state of Hypoglycaemia.

The High Court concluded the fact that Eunice Pieris survived for seven weeks without medicine on a normal diet makes the probability overwhelming, that she did not have endogenous Hypoglycaemia.

Circumstantial evidence

Once the cause of death of Russell and Eunice was established as Hypoglycaemia caused by the ingestion of an anti-diabetic drug, the prosecution still had to establish the *Corpus Delicti* or that a crime has been committed. Being a circumstantial evidence case, one had to look for evidence of the following circumstances: **A Motive; Opportunity:** Association with and access to the deceased; **Knowledge of the efficacy and effects of the drug when taken:** Ready access to the drug, Conduct of the offender during and after the offence; **Incriminating admissions made by the offender:** There was clear evidence to establish all the essential elements of a circumstantial evidence case; Close relationship between Rev Mathew and Dalrene following Rev Mathew's return to Sri Lanka. She continued to live in the vicarage Dalrene drew up a will making Mathew the executor and the guardian of her children; Mathew opened a joint Bank account with Dalrene; The joint motive was for Dalrene and Mathew to kill their respective spouses so that they could get together.

Surveillance ...

The defence Case: The defence Counsel argued, in the absence of direct evidence of involuntary ingestion of the anti-diabetic drug, that the prosecution has failed to eliminate endogenous causes leading to the death of Russell and Eunice Pieris.

- It was argued that the coma that led to the death of Eunice and Russell could have been as result of an Insulinoma or an islet cell tumour, in an ectopic tissue of the pancreas excreting unregulated amount of insulin. It further argued the tumour could have been the size of a pin head and may not have been detected in the Pathological or judicial post-mortem conducted on the respective persons;
- In the case of Eunice Pieris, it was argued, Eunice was diagnosed with Endogenous reactive depression by Dr Sathanandan, the Psychiatrist. The defence called Dr Sarath Abeysuriya, a Neurosurgeon who expressed an opinion that 'moderate depression' could

cause spontaneous reactive Hypoglycaemia and also resulting in a suppression of the hypothalamus with a resultant fall in blood pressure and the deprivation of oxygen to the brain cell causing an anoxia, which explains the finding of permanent brain damage.

Dr Abeysuriya provided three reasons why he concluded Eunice was depressed; •The objection to Dalrene's presence in the house; •The feeling of sadness about the breakdown of Malrani's marriage proposal; •And the diagnosis of reactive depression by Dr Sathanandan, the Psychiatrist.

However, the High Court concluded, quote "the Data Dr Abeysuriya relied on, to express that opinion was unsafe, unreliable and unacceptable to this court". Dr Sathanandan stated Eunice Pieris was treated for depression, and she left Dudans Hospital completely cured.

The defence further argued, as the prosecution evidence led through KDD Henry, the Government Analyst established, ingested drug Euglucon remained in urine for up to two days and in faeces up to 5 days and in blood for 3 days. In the teeth of this evidence, the defence complained that no samples were taken for analysis. This was a valid complaint.

- Dr E V Pieris in his testimony stated the testing for traces of the Euglucon was not available in the country at the relevant time. This statement was unchallenged by the defence and the court simply overlooked this deficiency in the prosecution case.

The trial in the High Court lasted 163 days. On the 15th January 1984 the Court delivered the judgment. It convicted Mathew and Dalrene of Conspiring to murder Russell Ingram and Eunice Pieris and with the murder of both.

On being asked what he has to say before he was sentenced Mathew said that he maintained his innocence and his faith in God. Mathew and Dalrene were then sentenced to be hanged by the neck until they were dead.

Appeal to the Court of Appeal

Mathew and Dalrene appealed to the Court of Appeal against their conviction.

In a judgment delivered, the appellate judges said while they accepted Rev Mathew and Dalrene had a close and amatory relationship that provided evidence of a motive to commit the offences, in the absence of any overt acts by Dalrene, the circumstantial case against Dalrene was equivocal on the issue of a common intention to Murder their respective spouses and the evidence was consistent with Dalrene 'having been a tool' in the hand of Rev Mathew.

The court affirmed the conviction against Rev Mathew but allowed the appeal against Dalrene on all counts and acquitted her.

Appeal to the Supreme Court

Rev Mathew was granted leave to appeal to the Supreme Court, but his appeal was dismissed, and the conviction affirmed

Epilogue

After having spent 15 years in gaol, Rev Mathew was released on a general amnesty on 28 October 1997, on his birthday. His death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 1994.

When he was released from jail, he was still in his robes with crucifix hanging on a chain strung around his neck. He was permitted to attend Mass the following Sunday and was permitted to administer the chalice to the parishioners.

He claimed that during his incarceration he never lost faith in God. He gave a newspaper interview, as celebrated exorcist, he explained what exorcism means: Quote: "Exorcism means that in given instance any individual is pressured by an external entity in an evil manner. In theological language, it is described as discernate spirit haunting

a person. Therefore, by claiming clearly the authority that Jesus Christ gave the apostles, authorising them to deal with such afflicted individuals, as an ordained priest accepts that he has the continuity of that authority. In some instances, dwelling places and lonely spots are affected by such spiritual entities. An exorcist or priest will cleanse such situation. In parlour language it is called poltergeist appearance. It is a ritual authorised by Pope Leo the 13th".

This story is now a Motion Picture titled *According to Matthew* being shown to full houses in the cinemas in Colombo. The release of the movie was delayed due to the protest by the Bishop of Colombo lobbying the politicians that it would bring the church in to disrepute. Eventually sanity prevailed and the movie was permitted to be shown in Cinemas in Sri Lanka.



Scenes in Main Street Colombo in 1918

It was a gruesome conflict of four years and the First World War officially ended on 11 November 1918. It ceased with an armistice that became effective at 11 am – the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month. With the war's ending, there were definitely outpourings of cheers and jubilation in numerous major cities in the world. Sri Lanka's Colombo was no exception. This was how the Natives celebrated World War I victory of their master on Main Street in Colombo on that historic day.

APPRECIATIONS

Subbiah Muthiah
13.4.1930 – 20.4.2019

Mr Madras passes away

Subbiah Muthiah described as the “chronicler of the city of Madras” passed away in April. A renowned journalist with an impeccable and long record of journalism at the highest level



both in India and Sri Lanka, he was known for the passion and dedication with which he wrote about the City of Madras, now known as Chennai. His love for writing and research, his drive, dedication, and organisational capabilities enabled him to record the history, architecture, the social environment of the city of Madras for posterity. It could be said that were it not for him what is known to the world today about Madras would be only a fraction of what he brought to light. To quote Vikram Raghavam from *The Hindu* “the city has lost its best known chronicler. In the past several decades, he made it his mission to bring to light the past of Madras and document the achievements of men and women of the city. It was a matter of never failing pride for him to list the number of firsts that the city could lay claim in various aspects of life. Today, these are commonplace facts, circulated on social media but had it not been for him, they would have been forgotten.”

My association with “Muthu” began almost 20 years ago, when a friend from Melbourne, Dr Srilal Fernando alerted me to a talk by him due to be presented in a church hall in Strathfield, Sydney. He had already made the presentation in Melbourne and Srilal was so impressed with the talk that he urged me not to miss the impending talk in Sydney. So it was on a pleasant Sunday afternoon that my wife and I made our way to the Church Hall at the appointed time, and not seeing anyone there were about to turn back. We were at the right place, but the talk was not well publicised, and hardly anybody was to be seen. We ultimately sat in the front row of seats together with the rest of the audience comprising five other people!

The talk was absolutely mesmerising, to put it mildly. He spoke on the subject of Indo-Lankans, the community of people of Indian origin living and working in Sri Lanka and the contribution they made to their land of adoption. Being an Indo-Lankan himself, the subject was close to his heart and the talk was well structured, factual, and embellished with snippets of personal anecdotes. After the talk I went over and had a chat with Muthu over a cup of tea,

and there began a beautiful friendship. I lost no time in inviting him to make the presentation again at the quarterly meeting of the Ceylon Society of Australia, in Sydney, which he did, once again sweeping everyone off their feet. He enrolled as a member of the Society in 2006 and was the Society’s only member from India for 13 years till his death this year. Since our first meeting we have lunched and dined together whenever he visited Sydney, either at his daughter’s residence in Strathfield, in my home, or in various restaurants.

He was a most engaging personality of whom I had previously known only through the pages of the Times of Ceylon Annuals of which he was the Editor during the 1960s. Soon after his talk to the Society, his magnificent folio sized book titled “The Indo-Lankans” was released. It was basically a pictorial reconstruction of the lives and achievements of Indo-Lankans a wide spectrum of people and personalities ranging from the humble tea plucker to the exalted Minister of State. It covered the lives of those who crossed the Palk Strait into Ceylon to work on plantations, on road constructions (he was reminded of this as a schoolboy when passing a PWD sign the initials of which was mischievously construed by a school mate as “Paray Wedakarana Demalu), and of the various ethnic groupings that comprised the Indo-Lankans. He was a prolific author producing more than 35 well researched books on Madras, its peoples, and, of course, his own Indo-Lankans.

Subbiah Muthiah was born in India on 13 April 1930. His father VR NM Subbiah Reddy, a Natukottai Chettiar, had received part of his education in Ceylon when he enrolled as a student at Ananda College in 1916. He later established himself as a successful businessman in Colombo and was the Proprietor and founder of General Trading Co in Steuart Place, Colombo, a successful import, export, and engineering company that later were agents for the popular Isabella Borgward car of the 1960s. The company was later to be known as Steuart Motors. He was a nominated member of the Colombo Municipal Council where he was elected Deputy Mayor in the 1940s. He was also the founding President of the Ceylon Indian Congress. A wealthy man he was also Co-proprietor with the Chettinad Corporation of the 300 acre tea property Carfax Estate Dickoya which was sold to Henry W Amarasuriya in 1934 on his return to Ceylon from India.

Muthiah, the son was born in 1930 in India with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth. The four year old Muthiah set foot in Ceylon for the first time in 1934. The family lived in their home “Biriling” in Havelock Road from where young Muthu was sent to Ladies College and later to study at St Thomas Prep School and still later to the school’s Gurutalawa branch. The Headmaster of St Thomas W.T. Keble was a great influence on young Muthu whose love for

literature and his extraordinary intellectual curiosity he said, he owed to Keble. That trait of intellectual curiosity, and the love for the written word in Muthu never ever left him. During the war years his father moved to a house No: 56 in Castle Street, Colombo right opposite that of Sir Oliver Goonetilleke who lived at No 55 "Evaldon", and was Civil Defence Commissioner of Ceylon during the time. The Subbiahs and the Goonetillekes became lifelong family friends so much so that Muthu saw his way into enrolling at Royal College during the Bradby years. His close friend Ernie (Sir Oliver's son) was already at Royal, and that encouraged him to make the move. When the war ended Muthu proceeded to USA where he studied engineering to set himself up to enter his father's business, but found that he did not have the appetite for it. After his studies at Columbia University where he gathered a Masters in International Relations, he returned to Colombo just over 21 years of age to attend his sister's wedding. On arrival his British/Indian passport was automatically invalidated and he was rendered almost stateless as both India and Ceylon had become independent countries during his sojourn in the USA. After a short spell working with his father, he joined the *Times of Ceylon* as a journalist. He was the key political and sports reporter for the Times where his column "By the corner flag" was very popular with sports fans, his main sports being rugby, cricket and basket ball.

He was deputy to Tori de Souza, the Editor of the *Times of Ceylon*, and was also Features Editor of the *Sunday Times*. Together with Tori he was co-editor on the Times of Ceylon Christmas Annual for 1960 and 1961, and thereafter, the sole Editor of the annual for the six following years. Those lavishly produced journals reflect the life and the history of the country and its social highlights during those years. To those fortunate collectors of the priceless annuals, they are a nostalgic hark back to the leisurely days of the past.

Muthu was a prominent and popular socialite in Colombo attending all the prominent dances regularly, and it saddened him to seek domicile elsewhere.

In 1968, at the age of 38 years, Muthu sensing that there was a growing anti-Indian sentiment in the country which would be an obstacle to his further advancement in his chosen career, decided to move back to the land of his birth. He told me of the sadness he felt in leaving behind friends, work place colleagues and others whose company he enjoyed during his years growing up as a young man in Colombo. Indian journalist V Sriram wrote "He was 38 and left many friends, affections, and memories. But he brought along his charming Ceylon cadence with its soft retroflexes and longer vowels". His heart was always in Ceylon and I make bold to say that the ethnic conflict of recent years in Sri Lanka had not led

him to taking any stance on the issues involved. He has never spoken or written about the conflict which I suspect he had either blocked out or erased out of his mind. He never alluded in any way to the issues that were involved or the personalities, and gave me the impression that such matters did not interest him. It was in Madras, however, that he reached great professional heights as a journalist as well as a central figure in coordinating and invoking public interest in the city, its history, architecture and social fabric. The remarkable impact he had on the city is best described by Vikram Ragavan, "Muthiah unveiled a slim book Madras Discovered in 1981. It was in his words, a historical guide to look around or discover the city. Now in its ninth edition, the book has sold thousands of copies and bears the name Madras Rediscovered. Since then Muthiah produced a number of other Madras-related titles." His Madras Miscellany now in its 970th publication, and Madras Musings both weekly columns in the Hindu newspaper attracts tens of thousands of readers. To quote Ragavan again "Muthiah was, and will always remain India's first chronicler of city history, architecture and life. No one has written more extensively or collected material like a magpie about a single metropolis or town. Across the country others are beginning to imitate Muthiah. Yet, few can command his osmotic relationship with his newspaper readers". And "Muthiah also told me that unlike Colombo, Madras gave him fame and recognition. Even so, unlike Madras, Colombo would always remain home for him, where he had spent some of the happiest days of his life."

Muthu's life story is, however, more than a "Tale of Two Cities". His engaging personality drew people to him, particularly as he was genuinely interested in their lives. His inscription on my copy of "The Indo Lankans" which reads "To Hugh and Tulsi with a shared love for Sri Lanka and its people" tells it all.

Although he enjoyed breathing the air of Madras, his heart was very much in Colombo. I knew him for about 20 years, but the strength of the friendship was so great that we seemed to be like life long friends. Such was the warmth that he radiated, ever willing to be of assistance, and genuinely concerned about those whom he knew. He was one of those "one in a million" personalities whose departure has created an unfillable void. Eighty nine years is a good innings, but I really thought he would carry his bat over the tantalising 90 which beckoned, but which sadly he could not make.

Muthu's wife Valli whom I was privileged to meet and know, sadly predeceased him a few years ago. He is survived by his two daughters and sons-in-law. The world is poorer by his irreplaceable demise, and he will be sorely missed.

by HUGH KARUNANAYAKE



Nihal De Zoysa
(12. 3. 1931 – 2.5.2019)

Nihal De Zoysa, a pioneer member of the Society, passed away recently, and his funeral was held in the presence of a large gathering at the Springvale Cemetery, Melbourne.

Nihal joined the Society upon the formation of the Melbourne Chapter in the year 2000 and was a founding member of that Chapter.

Nihal was the eldest of the four sons of Roland de Zoysa, District Judge, Colombo. Like his father and grandfather before him, Nihal and his three brothers had their entire education at Royal Preparatory School, and then Royal College, Colombo. They resided at Inner Flower Road from where the boys walked to school. The family later moved to Kynsey Terrace, Colombo 7.

All four brothers were acclaimed professionals following in the footsteps of Nihal. His younger brother Hema was a key member of the Planning Department and later joined the World Bank as an Economist. He sadly passed away of a heart attack in his prime. The two other brothers Dr Nilkanth de Zoysa a neuro physician, and Rudra de Zoysa formerly of the World Bank and Honorary Consul for Sri Lanka in New Zealand now reside in New Zealand.

Nihal joined the University of Ceylon's faculty of Engineering after leaving school. He was an outstanding student and was the first to obtain a First Class Degree in Engineering from the Faculty of Engineering, then headed by Prof EOE Pereira. After graduating he worked as an engineer with the Ceylon Government Railways. He was a pioneer who converted the old coal fired locomotives to oil fired. He was later to be an Assistant to the General Manager of Railways Mr B.D. Rampala. He subsequently worked as the Chief Engineer in the Ceylon Transport Board.

Nihal and his family migrated to Australia in the 1970s and worked as an Engineer in Government Service before retirement. A popular figure at social gatherings, Nihal will be missed by the various societies that he was member of.

He leaves behind his wife Srma, daughter Ananga and son-in-law Adeesha de Silva.

Shavian takes

Youth, which is forgiven everything, forgives itself nothing; age, which forgives itself everything, is forgiven nothing.

(G.B.Shaw - *Man & Superman*)

Take care to get what you like or you will be forced to like what you get.

(G.B.Shaw - *Man & Superman*)



General Meetings

Sydney
Sunday 25 August 2019

The 3rd Quarterly Meeting of the Ceylon Society will take place on Sunday 25th August 2019 commencing at 6.30 PM at Pennant Hills Community Centre Hall, Corner Ramsay Road (off Yarrara Road), Pennant Hills. Admission is FREE to all members and their guests and any others interested are all welcome to attend.



Arun Abey AM

will speak on *The Migrant Experience – ties between Sri Lanka and Australia*

Is it possible to be rich and happy? How can we use wealth wisely to produce the great outcomes that we hope for ourselves and our children and avoid the terrible outcomes that we know that the poor use of money can sometimes cause? These are the questions that have intrigued Arun Abey over 35 years working as a financial adviser and wealth manager for individuals and institutions.

He has also worked in academia, and been an entrepreneur and a strategy adviser to some of the world's largest firms, including being Head of Strategy for the AXA Asia Pacific Group for a decade. He is involved in a number of philanthropic and cultural activities and is the author of various international best sellers. What connects these diverse activities together is Arun's passion for ideas that help people thrive: to enjoy happier, more meaningful and financially secure lives.

Arun's latest book, *How Much is Enough?* draws on the latest behavioural research to explore the relationship between money and happiness. It has been published in various countries and languages and described by UCLA's Professor Shlomo Benartzi as a book "that will change your life balance, not just your bank balance".

Walsh Bay Partners, of which Arun is Executive Chairman, provides wealth and wellbeing advisory services to families and endowments. The emphasis is on creating deep relationships through family strategy planning and providing access to institutional quality investment opportunities. The most important measure of long term success is linking money to greater family wellbeing.

Arun Abey, B.Ec., B. A. (Hons), HonDUniv ANU, FFin Finsia is Chairman and Co-founder Walsh Bay Partners as well as Ipac Securities. He also holds the chairmanship of the Advisory Board, ANU College of Business and Economics, the Advisory Board SP Jain Global School of Management and the Abey Family Foundation. He is a Director of The Smith Family and Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee.

Synopsis of talk:

Arun Abey will focus on the migrant experience, with particular reference to the ties between Sri Lanka and Australia. With half of his formative 16 years in Sri Lanka and the other half in Australia, Arun's is a inspirational migrant experience. He will elaborate on his background in the land of his birth, his way of life there, and then the different aspects of his life after coming to live here.

Arun will focus on the reality of being a migrant, with the wealth of familiar culture, colour and tradition in one's homeland, with extended family and customs, and then the juxtaposition of transition to a completely different culture and way of life. The adaptation which is necessary, with the initial difficulties and traumas of adjustment, particularly for a young person, the protective colouration which may be used, the strategies used to gain acceptance, the acquiring of self-confidence and the ability to then move beyond the 'neither here nor there' stage to the integration and acceptance as a valued member of the country of adoption. This is a narrative that we can all relate to as migrants ourselves.

It takes courage to make a new life in another country, and to make a success of the transition does need hard work. Arun will tie the two strands of Sri Lanka and Australia together, giving it the meaning of what it is to be a migrant and make a successful transition.

Social:

After a brief question time period, the usual Social will follow. Those able are requested to kindly bring non-sweet savoury finger food. Please avoid cakes with icing as the general preferences are for plain cakes, sandwiches and savoury pastries. To avoid duplication of food items please contact our Social Convenor Amal Wahab on (02) 9402 7735.

As an alternative, a donation to the CSA to help defray costs could be made at the meeting.

*Sunimal Fernando,
Secretary, Ceylon Society of Australia.*

COLOMBO CHAPTER

The 3rd Quarterly Meeting is scheduled to be held at 5.30 pm on

Friday 6th September 2019

at the Organisation of Professional Associations (OPA), 275/75, Professor Stanley Wijesundera Mw (Off Bauddhaloka Mw/Reid Avenue, Colombo 7.

The Guest speaker is



Dr B.D. NANDADEVA

and he will talk on

Heritage in Line and Colour: ancient wall painting technology of Sri Lanka and issues of preservation covering ancient Temple paintings, Veddah Paintings and frescoes in Sigiriya and Dambulla.

Dr Nandaveva obtained his Ph.D at University of Delaware, DE, USA ,1998; Graduate Diploma, (University of Canberra, Australia 1990); M.Sc. (University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka 1986); B.A. (Hons) in Fine Arts, (University of Ceylon, Sri Lanka, 1975); Research study on Greek and Byzantine Art, University of Thessaloniki and at the British Schools of Archaeology at Athens, 1978-1980.

Dr Nandadeva retired as a professor from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, having served for nearly 40 years. Mainly taught Art History and in addition, Cultural Heritage Management, Wall Painting Conservation, Folk Arts, Writing about Art, Research Methodology, and World Cultures and Customs. He also taught at several other State and non-state higher educational institutions. Currently, serves as an independent consultant on tangible and intangible cultural heritage for governmental and non-governmental agencies.

MELBOURNE CHAPTER

**Sunday, 11 August 2019, 5.00 pm
at ASHWOOD HALL 2 (small hall)
21a Electra Avenue, Ashwood.**



Ananda Amaranath LLB

will present an illustrated talk on

**"Murders at the Vicarage –
The Mathew Peiris Case"**

This is a FREE event - All are welcome.

Refreshments provided.

Contact Hemal 0427 725 740
for all enquiries



Congratulations and a Warm Welcome to our New Members

KEITH BENNETT, Noble Park, VIC 3174;
MALAKA TALWATTE, Etul Kotte, Sri Lanka;
MAHI RATNAPALA, Normanhurst, NSW 2076;
FELIX & YASMIN STEPHEN, Cherrybrook,
NSW 2126;
MERRIL RUSSELL & INDIRA ALUWIHARE,
Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka;
MRS HASSINA LEELARATNA, Arieta, California,
USA 1331;
SENEVIRATNE & RUPA BANDA, Cherrybrook
NSW 2126;
LESLEY & CHELVI MANICKAM, Colyton,
NSW 2760.



Have you changed your address lately?

Have you changed your contact details lately? – home address, email address, landline telephone and Mobile phone number? If you have, please contact CSA Treasurer Deepak Pritamdas so our records can be updated and help us ensure the Journal will be mailed to you without interruption.

Contact Deepak on his Mobile 0434 860 188 or email him on deepakpsl@yahoo.com.

How to become a member

The CSA has been in existence for the past 21 years and continuing to draw the interest of both Sri Lankans and others world wide. Anyone with a common interest in the culture and history of Ceylon/Sri Lanka and wishes to share that interest is welcome to join this society. Younger members of the community are specially invited to do so.

Please get in touch with any of the following for details on obtaining Application Forms, making payments and so on: In **Sydney**: Deepak Pritamdas (Treasurer) P.O.Box 489, Blacktown NSW 2148. Mobile: 0434 860 188 Email: deepakpsl@yahoo.com
In **Melbourne**: Contact: Hemal Gurusinghe, Mobile: 0427 725 740 Email: hemguru@hotmail.com
In **Colombo**: M.Asoka T, de Silva (Local Treasurer) 011 282 2933 Mobile: 94 775097517 Email: desilvaasoka@yahoo.com

Also see "Important notice regarding CSA subscriptions ..." on page 35)

NOTE TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

The Ceylankan is a quarterly magazine published in Australia and circulated worldwide. The Editor is on the lookout for literary contributions from our members and others.

While original, previously unpublished articles are preferred, submissions relating to the culture, history and heritage of Ceylon/Sri Lanka in keeping with the ideals of the CSA and are of a non-racial, non-political, non-religious and non-controversial nature are always welcome.

New writers will equally receive our careful attention. Colonial, post-Colonial to modern. Your fascinating story waiting to be written may be the very story that our worldwide readership is waiting to enjoy. Submit your articles with little or no formatting – no indents at the start of paragraphs and no double spacing between lines; no space after full stops. Always use percent or per cent but never %. Where applicable, contributors are also asked to annotate bibliographical references, both for copyright purposes and to assist with further research by other members. Photographs to accompany your article, in colour or monotone, are welcome. They must be of a high resolution and in JPEG format.

While every effort will be made to print material that is relevant and correct we cannot take responsibility for errors. The Editor would appreciate if any such inaccuracies be brought to his attention as early as possible.

Give a valuable gift subscription
to a family member or friend



Your nominee will have
four quarterly issues
mailed to his/her home.

Please contact the
Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas
on 0434 860 188

Important notice regarding CSA subscriptions for 2019

The annual CSA membership fees have not been changed for over ten years. However, during this period there have been sharp increases in postage charges, printing costs, hall hires, insurance etc. and it is no longer possible to make ends meet. The CSA Committee at its last meeting reluctantly decided to **increase the annual membership fees for overseas members from AS \$30 to AS \$40, and for Australian Pensioners from AS \$20 to AS \$25.** The annual membership fees for other members resident in Australia will remain unchanged at AS \$30, and the rates for Colombo Chapter members will also remain unchanged.

Membership subscriptions for 2019 are now due and please arrange payment, together with any arrears where applicable. Payments could be made by an Australian dollar cheque in favour of "Ceylon Society of Australia" posted to Deepak Pritamdas, Treasurer CSA, P O Box 489, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia. Alternatively, a direct bank transfer could be made to the CSA Bank Account in Commonwealth Bank: BSB 062308, Account No. 1003 8725. Please do not fail to include with the transfer your name as

payee, otherwise we will have no way of identifying the payee. We have had two payments recently without the payee's name and we are unable to identify who has sent these payments.

For payments from overseas, if you have difficulty in sending the payment in Australian dollars, you could please send a bank draft or bank transfer in US dollars or Sterling pounds. We regret that personal cheques in foreign currencies are not acceptable. Since our Bank charges us 10 Australian dollars for converting a foreign currency payment to Australian dollars, please add 10 Australian dollars to the amount due and convert to US dollars by multiplying by 0.80, or if sending in sterling pounds, multiply by 0.60. These multipliers reflect approximately the current rates of exchange used by our Bank. For overseas bank transfers our Commonwealth Bank Swift Code is: CTBAAU2S

If you need any clarification please contact our Treasurer, Deepak Pritamdas, by email to: deepakpsl@yahoo.com. Also please send him an email when you send a direct bank transfer.

FUTURE MEETINGS OF CSA SYDNEY N 2019

- Sunday 25 August

AGM & Social

- Saturday 23 November

Waugh of words

For generations the British bourgeoisie have spoken of themselves as gentlemen, and by that they have meant, among other things, a self-respecting scorn of irregular perquisites. It is the quality that distinguishes the gentleman from both the artist and the aristocrat.

(Decline and Fall - 1928)

You never find an Englishman among the underdogs – except in England, of course.

(The Loved One - 1948)

Advertising in The Ceylankan

For some time, CSA members and others have indicated an interest in using the Journal to promote their goods and services. However, we have been maintaining the ideal of the founders of the CSA, that the Journal must not be made a means for commercial profit, but only a vehicle for research, study and broadcast of the rich heritage and culture of Ceylon/Sri Lanka.

Now, with the constant rise in costs of delivery of the Journal to members worldwide, we need to look at additional sources of revenue. Accordingly, the Committee has decided to accommodate advertising and promotional matter in the form of loose-leaf flyers, but not as part of the body of the Journal.

Suitable material, in keeping with the non-political, non-partisan aims and ideals of the CSA, will be considered. All such copy is to be submitted to the Editor for consideration.

Once accepted, the advertiser will need to supply the printed flyers in sufficient numbers for inclusion in that particular issue of the Journal.

The cost of inserting such flyers is \$500 per issue of the Journal, paid in advance.

The Magic of Antique Euro-Sinhalese Furniture



- Bureau cabinet of calamander wood is typical of Sinhalese furniture



- The Dutch Burgomaster chair



- 19th Century Ceylon Calamander side table



- 19th Century Carved ebony "Ceylon Chair" with profuse carvings of traditional Sinhalese motifs such as the pala peti or lotus flower



- The Dutch Chest or "Pettagama"