

The Times

The McLeod Russel
House Journal



July 2015



Editorial



We are midway through another Season and we wish the Planter success in all his endeavours.

In this issue we acquaint you with the Company's latest acquisition – Pfunda Tea Estate in Rwanda, Africa. We also keep you updated on the Company's efforts in furthering the cause of education in its Ugandan estates and their surrounding areas.

An account of the Vietnamese delegation's visit to India and to the Company's estates in Assam is presented in Phu Ben Communique.

In Outlook, we present the avant-garde project undertaken at Attareekhath T.E. – the Solar Power Plant – an initiative towards developing a source of environment-friendly and sustainable energy.

In the last issue, we had featured the Bamboo Bari at Koomsong T.E. – a natural ecosystem that harbours birds, insects and medicinal plants. In this issue, two Evolutionary Biologists from the National Centre for Biological Studies, Bengaluru, tell us about the species of butterflies that find sanctuary there.

We have many talented executives who, in the midst of their busy schedules, find the time to pursue their hobbies and interests. In Cameo this time, we get you better acquainted with one of the executives from our Guwahati office.

The Williamson Magor Education Trust, set up by the Company to encourage education and the literary culture of Assam, had initiated the Assam Valley Literary Award in 1990 to acknowledge the contribution of writers and poets to the literary heritage of the state. In its Silver Jubilee year, we bring you messages from some of the recipients of this prestigious Award.

We have anecdotes from a young planter in Kamjari and from recently retired planters in Reminiscence, while in Planter's Punch we bring you stories from the 1950s.

The three gourmet recipes featured in The Memsahab's Guide to Gracious Living will surely be welcome additions to many an upcountry lady's repertoire.

In addition to our other regular features we bring you a couple of new ones. Living as we

do 'cheek by jowl' with Nature, so to speak, many of us have had very close encounters with creatures of the wild. We have nurtured them till they were old enough to be set free to fend for themselves in their natural habitat, or looked after them for the rest of their natural lives. In our new feature, It's a Wild World, a planter recounts his experiences with his pet flying squirrel.

"As Man draws nearer to the stars, why should he not also draw nearer to his neighbours?" asked former US President, Lyndon B. Johnson. Why not indeed! Our other new feature, The World Around Us, focuses on the Singphos who live in close proximity to our estates in Margherita circle. It is interesting to note that they were growing, processing, brewing and drinking tea much before the first estate was established in Assam.

"Death is inevitable. When a man has done his duty, he can rest in peace and sleep for all eternity," said Nelson Mandela. We pay our respects to the late Vice Chairman of the Williamson Magor Group, Mr Deepak Khaitan – a visionary and dynamic leader – who left us all bereft in March this year – and also to Mr John Trinick who had been closely associated with the Company for half a century. We pray that they may rest in everlasting peace.



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With three decades of experience in steering diverse business enterprises, Mr Khaitan played an active role in McLeod Russel's acquisitions of tea companies and estates between 2004 and 2007. He was instrumental in bringing the Williamson Tea Assam Ltd estates into the McLeod Russel fold in 2005, thus putting the Company back on the global tea map as the world's largest bulk tea producer. His connection with the family's tea business goes back to his teenage years when he participated in the Company's centenary celebrations. Later, as a member of the Board, he helped the Company commemorate 125 years. This long association, along with his experiences in two of the Company's estates where he had lived and learnt the ropes of the tea business, forged a lifelong bond.

Mr Deepak Khaitan had served as President of ICC in 1991-92. Lamenting the demise of the "industrial doyen from Bengal", the present Director General of the ICC said, "During his tenure, ICC achieved new heights of excellence through a process of interaction and consultation with international and Indian experts on economy, business and management." Another official who had served with Mr Khaitan during his tenure said, "I will always remember him for his courage of conviction, his extremely forthright and honest views, thorough professionalism and deep commitment."



The Sportsman



In his younger days, Mr Khaitan was a top amateur golfer who played almost to a scratch handicap; “a man who had the game and could well have made the Indian Golf Team had he put his mind to it,” according to Brandon DeSouza, Indian Golf Consultant and Pro. He was, however, more of a horse racing enthusiast and until quite recently, had served as Chairman of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club. Using his keen business acumen, Mr Khaitan had guided the Turf Club out of financial difficulties by selling properties that could be dispensed with. He had also introduced several reforms, including

making the stakes the most attractive in India. The Indian Turf Invitation Cup held at RCTC two years ago “set benchmarks in terms of both hospitality and in the manner it was conducted” according to a sports feature. Over the years, Mr Khaitan owned many champion race horses but his favourite was Elusive Pimpernel. This horse that no one else had wanted to buy went on to win every big race in India and boasted five track records. A horse he co-owned, Astonish, besides having a successful career in the country, was the first Indian-bred horse to win back-to-back races in Hong Kong. The names of some of his horses have been inscribed in the archives of Indian racing history – among them being Dandified and Snow Drift, two of the last champions that he owned.



Mr Khaitan was considered one of the stalwarts of Indian racing whose presence enhanced the prestige of the sport in Kolkata. His many admirers say that it is difficult to think of racing in Kolkata “without the gold and red colours of Deepak Khaitan flying past the winning post with amazing regularity.”

The Family Man



In these times, when very few ‘joint families’ have survived the stresses and strains of modern life, four generations of the Khaitan family live in harmony under the same roof.

Mr Khaitan was always the dutiful son, caring husband, affectionate brother, loving father and doting grandfather. His family, in turn, rallied around him when he needed their love and support, testifying to the saying, “The family is a haven in a heartless world.”

The Light may have been extinguished and his voice passed on into the eternal silence but his words of wisdom will forever reverberate in the minds of those who knew him; his vision will guide his successors to pursue his unrealized dreams; and his accomplishments will live on as his legacy, inspiring generations to come.

In fond remembrance...

My first meeting with Deepak was in 1979 when he was on a visit to the Assam estates. He was introduced as Mr B.M. Khaitan's son and as youngsters we hardly had an opportunity to speak with him other than a gentle handshake. Like most Taureans he appeared shy, somewhat of an introvert, spoke just a few words and perhaps took time to settle down in knowing the planting community. Over a period of time, getting actively involved with the Tea Division business, he knew all Managers by their first name and was very comfortable in their company.

While in Mangoe Lane, I have seen Deepak operate differently. During the Macneill & Magor days in the 80s when the Tea business operated out of Mangoe Lane and other businesses out of Fairlie Place, trade union activity was at its peak with noisy demonstrations during lunch hour. It was Deepak who took it upon himself to put a stop to this menace and his biggest achievement was when he was able to terminate the 'Man-to-Man' replacement agreement which was binding at that point of time. After this followed the 'Voluntary Retirement Scheme' which was a great success. The Companies that exist today owe him gratitude because he looked ahead and saw that if these issues were not resolved, Companies would not be able to grow.

Deepak's enthusiasm to do things differently was limitless. He was a risk taker and his vision was always large. He loved new ideas and challenges and was willing to invest and try them out. Sitting in a meeting he would multiply a business proposal several times over to convince others of the scale that he was wanting to achieve.

He fought his illness bravely and will always be remembered as a very kind and gentle human being.

~ Rajeev Takru (McLeod Russel)

It seems unreal as I sit in my office and write this tribute to Deepak. I cannot but help having the uncanny thought that the door would open any moment and he would walk in with his amazing bundle of positive energy and that ever-smiling face. He would give me a boost on a blue Monday morning – as he would do on a carefree Friday evening. Thus was my experience with him over the last 20 years – working so closely with him – and he enriched my life in many ways!

He was an entrepreneurial spirit, a visionary leader and an effective leader of people – which made him the perfect industrialist and a manager. But what I saw in him beyond these, were qualities that made him such a fine human being – and made me learn much from him. I would like to mention those that struck me the most – his ability to rise against the heaviest odds, his receptiveness to other people's ideas with an open mind and his empathy and generosity towards people.

We faced unprecedented challenges in our business, twice, in the last 20 years. At both these times it looked as if we were staring at disaster and the situation appeared very dim. It had not been long that Deepak had joined us then as the MD of the company. But he led a fierce effort – taking the entire team with him – getting Eveready back on track.

He fought the gravest illness with a vigour I found matchless – and despite his struggles with his many daily inconveniences – he always had time for a smile.

He had an open mind to any new idea. But he was also a man of convictions – and very persuasive at that. So often he would come up with an idea that he would consider the best. Sometimes there would be someone in the meeting room who would stand up and say, "Mr Khaitan your idea is wrong." A fierce argument would follow. At such times, I was struck by Deepak's innate humility. Even as the boss he would accept that someone else might have a better idea. His only condition was, "Either you convince me or you be convinced – but when we leave the room we chase the same idea."

On his treatment of people, I cannot say enough. Sufficient to say that he went out of his way to see his people were looked after well. He would always reach out to someone he thought was having a tough time. And he would always do so silently – never wishing his efforts to be praised or acknowledged – again, because it came from his heart – and for no other reason.

After work, he was the most fun-loving of people. He loved to travel and was always open to new experiences. He took childlike pride in his knowledge of flight routes, hotels and restaurants. We would joke and say to him that he must have been a travel agent in a previous life. He was always up-to-date with the latest happening in the world of sports. He would stay up late to watch the US Masters or the Grand Prix happening at some other end of the world – and yet show up at work the next morning fresh as ever. He was also the model family man. His world revolved around his family – and he put family before self and all else.

He is gone now for more than a month – I find it hard to accept. It was my good fortune that I had the opportunity to work closely with such a fine human being.

Deepak, I will forever cherish your memory and try a little, may be, to emulate some of your qualities. You have been my greatest source of inspiration and courage. Deep within my heart I will always treasure that Image.

~ Swamoy Saha (Eveready Industries)

JOHN MAXWELL TRINICK



1928 - 2015

"A man of immense knowledge of Tea and a gentleman to the core. Our Planters held him in such high esteem, as did my Board at H.O. I will always carry with me fond memories of his friendship."

~ B.M. Khaitan

Mr Trinick joined the Williamson Magor Group as Tea Taster and Manufacturing Adviser in 1963, spending four months a year at a stretch in Assam, with his headquarters at Sangsua T.E. He moved base to Phulbari T.E. in 1967, and from 1972 onwards, started visiting Assam twice a year, staying for two months each time. On his retirement in 1993, Mr B.M. Khaitan requested him to stay on as Consultant and visit the estates, which he did, thus continuing his association with the Company which began five decades ago.

"We are all put on this earth to achieve our greatest selves and to live out our purpose to the best of our ability"...some do it better than others. In 1998, Country Life Awards – UK, presented Mr Trinick with a specially designed wall plate inscribed with the words 'Living National Treasure' in recognition of his unique place in the world of Tea.

Mr Trinick had a legendary palate and his assessment of teas was recognized as the epitome as far as the tea industry was concerned. His legacy to the Company include the Trinick Sorter – a single deck sorting machine which he invented, and his valuable inputs to the Manufacturing Manual.

The senior planters who had the privilege of working with Mr Trinick all cherish their association with him. Not only was he greatly respected by everyone upcountry for his professional knowledge and expertise, but he was also universally liked for his amiable nature and keen sense of humour.

With his exceptional qualities and invaluable contribution towards the development of the Company, 'JMT' will always have his own special place in the annals of the Williamson Magor Group.

"The destination is a happy life, an accomplished life That doesn't end with death but with eternal life."

May his soul rest in peace.



– Sarita Dasgupta

The Bargang Tea Company Limited, incorporated on 10 January 1896, originally comprised the Bargang and Kettela estates in present Sonitpur district, Assam. Financed by the Mercantile Bank of India Ltd, the company had R. B. Magor, Esq as Chairman and D. Landale, Esq, H. Tod, Esq and A. G. Watson, Esq on the Board of Directors.

Messrs Williamson, Magor & Company were the company's Agents in Calcutta while Messrs George Williamson & Company served as Secretaries.

In 1896, the estates comprised 793 acres planted out, of which 670 were four years old. At present, Bargang T.E., comprising three Divisions – Rungaghur, Bargang and Borbheel – covers 1005.88 Ha. The estate is HACCP, Rainforest Alliance and ISO22000 certified, and produces 18,50,000 kg tea annually.

Legend has it that Ronga Bora, Army Chief of the Ahom ruler, Maharaja Rudra Singha, was given the responsibility

of controlling the Dufflas who used to come down from the neighbouring hills and create a great deal of trouble for the plains people living east of the Bharali River. Ronga Bora defeated the Dufflas and chased them up the hills, thus bringing peace to the area. The grateful populace named the place Ronga Bora in his honour.

When the British planted tea in the adjoining area they named the estate Ronga Bora too, but in the course of time, Ronga Bora became Rongaghora and then Rungaghur T.E. Much later, the Rungaghur estate merged with Bargang T.E. and became one of its Divisions.



Old Factory at Borbheel



The Leitch Tree

Apart from the shade trees, the estate is dotted with afforestation areas wherever space permits. A tree that a 'puja' was performed under during Mr John Leitch's tenure (1967–1976) has been named after him. To ensure that no one would cut the tree or damage it in any way, Mr Leitch had declared it a sacred tree.

Afforestation



Creating Awareness

Bargang T.E. was named after the Borgang River which flows along the west of the estate. The name of the river is supposed to have been derived from Borgam, the name of the official appointed by Maharaja Rudra Singha to govern the area after his Army Chief had defeated the Dufflas. 'Borgam' became 'Bargaon' and later, 'Borgang'.

The third Division, Borbheel, was an independent estate named after a 'Bor beel' (big pond) near the Borgang River. A portion of this pond still exists next to the present Section No 7.

All the Divisions have vermi-compost units which produce a good amount of organic manure, and this is used to enrich the soil in young tea Sections and weak areas of the estate, as well as in the tea and shade tree nurseries. Organic matter is used in the recently constructed Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) units to produce natural insecticides.



Shade & Tea Nurseries



Vermi-compost (above) & ITK Units (below)





Abom Pukhuri

Water bodies, such as the large pond called 'Ahom Pukhuri' in Bargang Division dating back to 1800, are protected and new water bodies are created to improve the microclimate. Wastage of water is discouraged and the estate's populace is continuously educated about ways to save water.

Two hospitals and one dispensary provide health care to the garden's residents. Health awareness programmes are conducted regularly. One of the happy outcomes is that 90% of births now occur in the estate's hospitals rather than at home. Family planning programmes, immunization and eye care camps, provision of prosthetic and orthotic appliances to the disabled, corrective surgery of cleft lip or palate – these are some of the regular features in the health promotion schedule of the estate. The Mothers' Club, started in 1999, helps in carrying out all these activities by educating the populace about their benefits.



The Medical Team & Mothers' Club

The Mothers' Club also plays an active role in helping to promote proper social and health practices in the community by looking after Line sanitation, spreading knowledge regarding health and hygiene, and educating the workers regarding environmental issues. Hunting is banned and numerous wild animals which stray into the estate are set free either into the bordering forests or into the safe custody of forest officials.

Wildlife Protection



Bijli Prasad in Full Regalia



“Fortunately, one of the teams spotted Bijli and brought him back home safely. Mrs Magor and Mrs Garwood arrived an hour later and spent a delightful afternoon with Bijli (whom they fondly called ‘Shiam’) completely unaware of what had kept Bargang’s team on its toes for the past 24 hours!” says Mr Saxena.

Two well-equipped central crèches and several mobile ones, each with responsible attendants, are provided for the care of infants with working mothers. Older children are educated in the estate’s three L.P. Schools – one in each Division.

One animal which has a permanent home at Bargang however, is the octogenarian elephant, Bijli Prasad. Bijli was bought in 1968 by Mr John Leitch to help in uprooting old tea bushes and for other heavy work. Mr Leitch put him on a salary from which his food, medicine and the mahout’s wages were paid for. The rest was put into a pension scheme for the pachyderm.

Mr Anand Saxena (Manager 1991–2000) remembers an occasion when Bijli Prasad gave him and his team at Bargang a sleepless night back in November 1996. A day before Mrs Julia Magor and her daughter, Mrs Jennifer Garwood, were due to visit Bargang the pachyderm decided to go missing! He failed to return from his routine grazing trip to the local forest. His distressed mahout informed Mr Saxena that Bijli had walked deep into the forest with a few wild elephants. Bijli’s safe return was a top priority not only because the Magor family doted on him but also because he was beloved by all on the estate. Five teams consisting of Assistant Managers, forest officials and the estate’s workforce searched the forest for hours.



Crèche



Sport plays an important role in strengthening the bonds among the management, staff and workforce. Inter-Line football, cricket and volleyball tournaments are keenly contested on the estate every year. The staff and workers' clubs in each Division are equipped with the basic indoor and outdoor sports facilities, and are the after-hours recreational hubs for the whole family.

All the major religious and cultural festivals, such as Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Kali Puja, Christmas, Easter, Rongali Bihu and Magh Bihu, are celebrated with great enthusiasm on the estate. An inter-Line 'jhumur' dance



The Team:
 Seated (L to R):
 R. Shukla, P. S. Gill (Senior Manager), P. J. Sarma,
 Dr N. R. Mahanta
 Standing (L to R): P. Roy,
 V. Singh, Dr B. Das, S. Singh



competition is also held every year, while the estate's annual picnic is an event every family looks forward to.

Bargang will be completing 120 years next year; we wish the estate and all its inhabitants many fruitful seasons ahead.





LAURELS



The Chairman, Phu Tho Provincial People's Committee, awards the Certificate of Merit to Phu Ben Tea Company Ltd as 'Best Enterprise of Phu Tho Province' for the year 2014.



Hearty congratulations to Mr Utpal Ghosh of HO Kolkata who was one of the recipients of the INFOSEC MAESTROS AWARDS 2015 – TOP 50 MOST PROMISING CISOs, in recognition of his contribution to Information Security, at an event held in Bengaluru between 10 and 12 April 2015.

This award has been initiated to inspire the innovative, talented and hardworking information security professionals across the verticals, from all over the country.



A Visit to India

“We travel, initially, to lose ourselves; and we travel next to find ourselves. We travel to open our hearts and eyes and learn more about the world than our newspaper will accommodate. We travel to bring what little we can in our ignorance and knowledge, to those parts of the globe whose riches are differently dispersed...” ~ Pico Iyer

A Warm Welcome



To truly understand a person's being, it is very important to go back to the roots. It was with this thought in mind that the Delegation from Vietnam set out on a ten-day journey with Syed Nishat Hussain of Phu Ben Tea Company. While Phu Ben is situated in the sleepy hamlet of Thanh Ba Town, its current management constitutes primarily of Indians. Taking a group of Vietnamese delegates on a colourful tour of India was therefore a vital exercise in strengthening Indo-Vietnam ties, a philosophy that Phu Ben Tea stands by. With 99 % of Phu Ben's workforce being Vietnamese, the operations have always been an eclectic mix of cultural diversity.

Mr Hoang Dan Mac, Party Secretary of Phu Tho Province, and eight other Ministers began their journey through Incredible India on 23 January 2015. Where better to start the journey than at the heart of the nation, New Delhi?

The exciting yet educational adventure began early the next day with the delegation heading to Sulabh Bhawan, where Indian philanthropist and social entrepreneur, Dr Bindeshwar Pathak, greeted them. Dr Pathak has dedicated his life to working for the upliftment of the sadly called “backward classes”, mostly employed as sanitation workers. The group visited the Sulabh health centre, biogas plant and kitchen, public school, vocational training centre, Technology Park and even the toilet museum! The delegation then got a sense of being ‘home away from home’ at a meeting and dinner held in the Embassy of Vietnam in India.

The group embarked on their journey to the holy land of Bodh Gaya the next morning, stopping along the way for lunch at Nishat's ancestral village, Alinagar Pali. Seeing hundreds of villagers who have never stepped out of their small and cozy community react with delight at meeting the “out-of-townners” was quite a sight! The delegation was treated to a feast of local cuisine, complete with chopsticks et al!





They then proceeded to Bodh Gaya, where they visited the temple and saw the Maha Bodhi tree, a moving experience for all.

After some food for the soul, the enlightened group flew to Kolkata, where they were welcomed by the Company and put up at the Taj Bengal hotel. A meeting at Four Mangoe Lane gave the team a chance to get acquainted with the brains behind the operations that they were so curious to learn more about. The delegation interacted with Mr Aditya Khaitan and others of HO over drinks and dinner. Several “Chuc suc khoe” (“Cheers!”) and “Tram phan tram” (“Bottoms up!”) later, Mr Mac and Mr Khaitan parted with a promise of “Hen gap lai” (“See you soon”).



The group was then swept off to Dibrugarh for the most integral part of their journey. To really be able to fathom how much hard work and dedication goes into running the largest tea company in the world, it was important for the team to visit Assam and see the powerhouse in motion. This gave them a deeper understanding of Phu Ben and the constitution on which it is built – a spin-off from the successful business model run in the tea estates of Assam since the inception of the Company.



The delegation was divided into two groups to travel to Dirok T. E. – one group, comprising Mr Mac, Mr Cuc, Mr Khanh, Mr Viet and Nishat, were welcomed by Mr Anil Pandit (VA), Mr Nisar Ahmad (AVA) and Mr Sanjay Batra (General Manager, Dirok) on their arrival via the Cessna. Amidst the fear of flying in “something so small” as they called it, the visitors were treated to a bird’s eye view of the lush greenery and sprawling estates. The second group of visitors chose the more conventional means of travel and drove, reaching in time for lunch.

20) Anotation provide later



The ladies outdid themselves, laying out a hearty and sumptuous meal. The visitors then drove for a short factory visit, seeing the quintessential cuppa at its inception point.

A lavish dinner and cocktails ensued at Hill House, attended by members of the tea fraternity. Local performers entertained the guests with dancing. Mr Mac delivered a speech on the valuable friendship between Vietnam and India in general, and between Phu Tho Province and Phu Ben Tea Company in particular. He also expressed sincere thanks for the warm welcome and kind hospitality of the tea estate leaders and went on to wish for better cooperation and investment from India in Phu Tho Province.

Mr Sandeep Nagalia's guided tour of the Namdang T. E. factory ended with a Seven Star breakfast relished by all! The group then headed back to Dibrugarh, where they

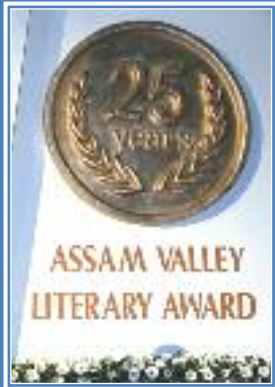
boarded planes for Pune. Upon arrival, the delegation headed to the JW Marriot hotel. They were entertained in Pune by a team from Kirloskar, and also had a chance to interact with members of the CII. The short visit ended with the delegation's return to New Delhi, where they met the Minister of State for Water Resources – Sri Sanwar Lal Jat, and Minister of State for Agriculture – Sri Sanjeev Kumar Balyan.

The Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, organized the farewell dinner, an elaborate seven-course sit down meal, in the Darbar Hall of Hyderabad House.

As is true of any travels – sightseeing and shopping wound up a trip that would forever serve as a time capsule in the minds of a few Vietnamese men who experienced Indian hospitality by those who embody it best – the Chai Sahabs and Memsahabs!



At Hill House



Assam Valley Literary Award

The prestigious Assam Valley Literary Award marks its 25th year. Over the last quarter century, the Award has been presented to twenty-five outstanding writers and poets whose creative work has enriched the literary heritage of the state of Assam.



The Award for 2014 was presented to eminent poet, critical theorist and translator, **Sri Hirendra Nath Dutta**, by celebrated Gujarati poet and playwright, Sri Sitanshu Yashaschandra, in Guwahati on 18 April 2015 in the presence of a distinguished gathering of the city's intellectuals, bureaucrats and cultural luminaries.

"I am very grateful to Williamson Magor for honouring me with this Award," stated Sri Dutta in his acceptance speech.

Messages from Recipients of the Award



The Assam Valley Literary Award is a very prestigious award. The Williamson Magor Educational Trust confers this award every year on an eminent writer of Assam. A selection committee comes up with the name of the writer by proceeding through different phases, and thus far this process has been conducted flawlessly and smoothly. While occasional murmurs of objection have been heard about some other awards, no one has been able to point an accusing finger at this award so far. After the first award-giving ceremony was held in 1990, 25 people have been the recipients of the award, among them two being women. A distinguished personality from another state of India is invited to give away

the award. At the present moment an amount of four lakh rupees is set aside as award money. I had received this award in the year 2003, and I express my heartfelt gratitude to the Williamson Magor Educational Trust for the honour that was conferred on me.

Smti Nirupama Barzohain (2003)



The Assam Valley Literary Award of the Williamson Magor Educational Trust has been considered to be the most prestigious one. Initiated 25 years ago, it has given impetus to emerging groups of Assamese writers, thereby indirectly advancing the process of the growth and development of Assamese language and literature. I too was one of the proud awardees of the Trust which deserves credit mainly because, through this award, it has set an example of the interest of the industrial houses in the cultural and economic development of the region.

Padmashree Dr Lakshmi Nandan Bora (2004)

I happened to be in England for a couple of months undergoing a course of training on radio programming with the BBC in London. During that time, I had to move around different places in England in connection with my training assignments. While on tour, I came across people who used to ask me where had I come from. When I said I had come from Assam, the easternmost part of India, everyone who asked me the question would then say, with an awestruck look and a glowing face, "Oh, Assam! Assam Tea! Great!"

The fact that Assam is well-known outside the country with an identity, could be attributed to the more-than-a-century old tea industry of Assam. And, Williamson Magor has been one of the major contributors in creating the great tea-tradition in Assam.

I feel proud and extremely happy that I happen to be one of the close and long associates of this famous tea company, not with their efforts at making tea but with their most commendable socio-cultural and literary programmes including the prestigious Assam Valley Literary Award under the aegis of Williamson Magor Education Trust.

Long live Williamson Magor Education Trust!

Padmashree Arun Sarma (2005)



In the annals of the Literary Awards of Assam, Williamson Magor Education Trust, twenty-five years back had planted a significant milestone by instituting the Assam Valley Literary Award, the highest Literary Award till today in Assam. This award is taken to be the most prestigious and coveted one in the state. It is also recognized as an award of high value not because of its monetary worth, but because of the most unbiased and objective process of selection of writers for the award. I congratulate the Trust for playing an important role in projecting Assamese Literature before the world of letters.

Dr Naçen Saikia (2007)

As a man and writer, my life is closely associated with tea gardens which form an integral part of my life. My outlook towards the outer world and my vision for a strife and tension free future is born out of the greenery of a place named Behora T.E. – a very old tea estate synonymous with the tea company, Williamson Magor. I consider myself fortunate to have been born and brought up in Behora as a part of the Williamson Magor family. I still remember those days when I came into contact with officials like Mr Mardy, Mr Jewell, Mr Barua, Mr Pariat, Mr Walker and especially Mr Harcharan Singh, who were not only my source of inspiration but also a source of energy and creativity towards a bright future. But the name, 'Thomas Sahib' still resounds in my mind like an echo of a soothing downpour, known widely for his kindness, generosity and love towards the labourers. I used to hear all about him since my early days. It was my deceased father, my teacher uncle and my people at Behora who not only instilled in my mind the dream for a better world but also taught me how both the management and workers could develop a bond of amity and friendship to work together for a fully developed life and a dignified society along with the growth of the Tea Industry.

Behind any award, whether it be regional or worldwide, is a noble intention to acknowledge the creative genius that works silently for the welfare of mankind, as well as a humble effort to encourage the creative genius to create greater works. The Assam Valley Literary Award, constituted by the Williamson Magor Education Trust, is one such initiative towards recognizing genius; and also an effort to encourage these creative masters and to create a congenial atmosphere where literature and creativity can thrive. I am immensely grateful to the Williamson Magor Education Trust for conferring me with this award.

Sri Sameer Tanti (2012)





PFUNDA TEA COMPANY LTD

~ Amar Pal Singh Shaw
Former General Manager, Pfunda Tea Company

In a few hundred words I shall endeavour to convey the achievements, emotions, associations experienced over a decade and give the reader a glimpse of what Pfunda was at the time of privatisation and what it is today – one of the finest estates in Africa.

My wife (Manjeet) and I landed at Kigali International Airport on 31 October 2004. Our knowledge of Rwanda being limited to the BBC news coverage of the 1994 genocide, we did not really know what to expect. We were warmly welcomed by the young Immigration Officer at the airport, and informed that Rwanda was the most beautiful country in Africa, if not in the world.

Having spent the night at the Hotel Des Mille Colleens, of 'Hotel Rwanda' fame, we motored to Pfunda, which lies below the Nyiragongo volcano and above Lake Kivu, in an area known as the Congo-Nile Crest, in the Western Province. The road meandered along valleys, ridges and crests, bringing into view the hillsides covered with 'patchwork quilt' fields. We understood what the Immigration Officer had said about Rwanda's scenic beauty and why 'The Land of a Thousand Hills' is often referred to as 'the Switzerland of Africa'. We reached Pfunda at around 11 AM, after a three-hour drive. Mr Evariste Bizimana, the Manager of Pfunda, received us and showed us around the factory and its ancillary buildings which were in a state of complete disrepair – with corroded roofing sheets weighed down by boulders to keep them in place. I thought, "What have I got myself into?" The CTC rollers made loud grinding noises, the dryer fans were howling away – the noise level in the factory was cacophonous. In the one and a half hours that we were in the factory the processing had to be stopped thrice due to machines breaking down. I spied a worker dart behind the store house to relieve himself and realised why the factory premises had an overwhelming ammonia-like odour. There were no proper toilets and washrooms. The only good thing about the factory was its basic structure – it had been built to last.

The next day, Mr Bizimana and Mr Come De Gaulle, the Head of Plantation, took me around the tea fields. Pfunda's tea area totalling 884.67 Ha (BI, belonging to the factory: 106.49 Ha and TV, belonging to small farmers' cooperative: 778.18 Ha) is spread over seven sectors: Pfunda, Gahembe, Kigeyo, Cyabarera, Nyabirasi, Kagera and Nyamugali. The altitude ranges from 1700 metres to 2200 metres. There were signs that the planting, first carried out in 1965, had been done very scientifically, with a proper drainage system. Now the drains were choked, with water backing up into the tea area; tea bushes under plucking had been allowed to grow to over 1.5 metres in height; pruning was on a 4-year cycle and bushes were chopped down to between 20 cm and 25 cm. Green leaf weighing sheds were falling apart, and the bridges were broken and unmotorable. However, looking at the tea fields I felt that there was only one way that Pfunda was going and that was upwards.

Standing in the Gahembe sector office looking into the distance, I once again marvelled at the beauty of the countryside, amplified by the crispness of the air and the clarity of the light.



A Panoramic View

I always felt Pfunda had an enchanted, pre-historic atmosphere in the earlier years when there were no lights from Gisenyi and Goma but one could see the glow and the chimney of the live volcano Nyiragongo as dusk set in and the silhouettes of the volcanoes grew before finally vanishing into the dark night. The only thing missing were the dinosaurs!

On 6 November, David Graham and his son Tresham reached Pfunda and the three of us made another tour of the factory and tea fields the next day. While David quizzed me about my opinion of the factory and tea fields, my mind was a jumble of conflicting thoughts: "How will I manage to turn this place around? I don't speak French, the staff don't speak English, the farmers and workers only speak Kinyarwanda. But, there are opportunities here. We can't go wrong; the place is already at rock bottom and anything we do will only bring it up." So, I simply said that Pfunda had tremendous possibilities and could be made into something good.

On 9 November, at a small ceremony held at the Hotel Des Mille Colleens, Mr Donald Kaberuga, the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, handed over management of Pfunda Tea Company Ltd to LAB International Ltd which had acquired 55% shares. In 2008, the company purchased another 35% shares to take its stake to 90% and the remaining 10% was given to Cooperative Des Theiculteurs De Pfunda, the tea farmers' cooperative.

Factory Expansion – Phase II



The Grahams left and I and got down to planning the transformation of the factory and tea fields. The communication barrier was overcome by hiring a translator who also taught the staff basic English. Plans were made for Pfunda factory to have a capacity of 2.5 million kg made tea per annum. This expansion, started in 2005, was to be done in three phases on site and in



Team Pfunda

house. On its completion by August 2015, the factory will have a capacity of 3.5 million kg made tea per annum. The additional 1 million kg will come from the new tea areas. Thanks to the confidence that the Grahams had in Team Pfunda – A.P.S. Shaw, A.S. Nain and R. M. D'Rozario – Pfunda, from



a derelict tea factory equipped with just 28 withering troughs, one line Rotorvane, three cut 30 inch CTC, one dryer giving a maximum output of 150 kg made tea per hour, is today a factory equipped with 92 withering troughs, four lines Rotorvane, four cut 36 inch CTC, two dryers, processing 55,000 kg of green leaf in sixteen hours.



Cooperative Des Theiculteurs De Pfunda

Unique to Pfunda, the BI tea area is scattered all over and in between the small farmers' tea fields in plot sizes ranging from a few hundred bushes to about 14 Ha. From the outset it was realised that with just

106.49 Ha of tea, the productivity of the Cooperative had to improve immensely for the investment in Pfunda to pay off. A policy was put in place to render free of cost extension services on tea field management to the Cooperative, make available interest free loans for purchase of fertilizer and trucks for green leaf transport, plus other inputs. Having BI tea fields scattered as they were, was turned into an advantage; they were used as demonstration plots to teach the small farmers better tea husbandry techniques. Corrections were made in drainage, weeding, fertilizer application, pruning style, pruning cycle; plucking rounds were tailored to the number of days it took for the leaf to unfold. The result – Pfunda doubled its production in eight years, from 1,099,625 kg made tea in 2004 to 2,372,178 kg in 2012. In 2014 Pfunda produced 2,359,654 kg made tea.

To increase production in order to sustain future cost escalations and maintain profitability, land leases of 306.3784 Ha were purchased in the area bordering the breathtakingly beautiful Gishwati National Forest from which on rare occasions one can hear the chimpanzees call. This land is on hillsides with extremely steep gradients, on an altitude between 2000 to 2300 metres. Tea has already been planted in 235.5227 Ha, with another 17 Ha programmed for planting in October 2015.



Planting Tea

Newly Planted Tea



Approximately 38.5 Ha will be converted to a forest and wildlife conservation area. 15.3 Ha has been used for approximately 10 km of roads, as well as offices, nurseries, green leaf weighing sheds and sector offices.

The Cooperative has also committed to planting an additional 200 Ha of new tea. The expected increase in production once these new tea areas mature and come into bearing is 1,256,000 kg of made tea.

Staff Colony



Visitors find it hard to comprehend that all road construction has been done manually – no bulldozers or

mechanical earthmoving equipment was used. When they see the factory area with its compound, paved roads and paths, the two staff housing areas with well maintained houses and manicured patches of green, and the two children's parks, all kept spotlessly clean in keeping with the best international standards, they are amazed that such a facility exists in Rwanda. Pfunda manages to create a 'feel' about it that is warm, friendly, mindful of others and a place where people want, and feel privileged, to be. The weed free young tea planted in the most hostile terrain, with infrastructure such as roads, bridges, green leaf weighing stations and sector offices already in place, is a pioneering effort; it is every tea planter's dream come true and a matter of great pride for A. S. Nain and R. M. D'Rozario.

Post-privatisation Pfunda has many achievements to be proud of – it was the first to increase daily labour wages and has always paid the highest daily wage in the Rwanda tea sector. In November 2010, Pfunda's Food Safety Management Systems were approved by the auditors from URS Egypt and Pfunda was given the ISO 22000:2005 certification. In February 2011, when Pfunda was awarded Rainforest Alliance accreditation, Ms Adelaide Webster said, "Congratulations! This is the first ever Certificate issued in Rwanda, so this is especially exciting for us."

Safe Practices



Pfunda takes its corporate social responsibility very seriously. It regularly contributes to GIRINIKA, the one cow per family scheme, helps financially in carrying out repairs and extensions to schools in various administrative sectors around Pfunda, and has contributed generously to the government's AGACIRO (self reliance) fund. As roads are necessary for the development of the local economy, Pfunda maintains the public roads and bridges in the tea sectors. Water is fast becoming a scarce resource so Pfunda contributes financially towards rainwater harvesting schemes in local schools. Pfunda also opened a 'tea sales' outlet just outside the factory, on the Musanze-Rubavu highway, in January 2012.

Meandering Roads



On 26 November 2014, Borelli Tea Holdings Limited purchased LAB International Ltd's 90% shareholding in Pfunda. For the Grahams the parting with Pfunda was not easy, as there were many emotions and happy memories, but as I am fond of saying, "Business does not run on sentiment," so a business decision was made, and Pfunda became a part of the McLeod Russel family.

As I move on from Pfunda my mind reasons that with all the resources and experience that McLeod Russel has, Pfunda is in safe hands; but like a parent reluctant to part with a child grown up, I do at times feel apprehensive whilst looking back with a smile and the satisfaction of a job enjoyed and well done.



CHICKCHICK

~ Amlan Jyoti Chakravarti
Bordubi T.E.

Looked at the dark greyish-brown, tennis-ball sized creature in my palm. It was soft and warm. I could feel its heart beating fast in the tiny cage of its ribs. I ran my fingers along its back. It was not afraid, or perhaps, too new in this world to know what fear was. With a slight movement of its body, it settled itself comfortably in the hollow of my palm.

And the attachment began...

One spring day, during the morning 'kamjari' round, I happened to rescue it from a paniwallah's bag. I was told it was a 'khera-bachcha' (baby rabbit).



Later, at breakfast, we discovered to our utter surprise and excitement, that it was not a baby rabbit, but a baby squirrel. A dropper

and bowl of warm milk had been arranged by then. I started to feed it - a few drops at a time. After that, our baby squirrel slept happily for hours, covered with a warm, soft cloth spread on a bed of dry hay in a shoe box.

At Mahakali T.E. we were close to the Borjan forests. The wildlife around was a great source of pleasure and excitement in the seclusion of an interior estate. Even in our own bungalow compound, two old trees in a corner of the lawn were frequented by squirrels. But they were not 'flying' squirrels - our 'Chickchick' was. Yes, we named him 'Chickchick' as His Excellency made his presence or his hunger known to us with this shrill call, "Chickchick, chickchick."



He was kept in the 'jaali-verandah' which was airy as well as safe for him. Soon we found that Chickchick was smart enough to come out of his corner to inspect his new-found 'home'. Sometimes, the whole family, along with the bungalow staff, would go crazy searching for him until he was found half asleep, hidden in some pot plant!

From the very first day we all loved him from the core of our hearts. He was as welcome as a newborn baby in the family and till today, when he is no more, we feel we had some deep, unknown connection with him, perhaps from a previous life - such was the bond.

Chickchick grew up very fast. Within four months of his arrival, he measured almost one foot from nose-tip to tail-end, weighing around four hundred grams. His species is commonly found in the north-eastern region of India, Bhutan, the Indo-China border area and Myanmar. On both sides of his body he had the 'gliding skin' (the 'patagium', a furry parachute-like membrane that stretches from wrist to ankle) which made him look almost like a bat while gliding. His back was covered with shiny grey and brown fur, with white borders on both sides, while his

belly was covered with snow-white fur. With his whiskers, and a pair of dark, prominent, alert, naughty and very expressive eyes, he completed the look of a perfect rodent 'dandy'.

He was a gorgeous 'glider', enjoying his 'glide' from one corner of the verandah to another, sometimes resting on the nets and looking at us as if expecting a standing ovation. The fans were kept switched off to avoid any mishap – even when it was too hot. The potted plants were his 'forest' playground. Before we could realize the necessity of being alert, he nibbled away many a showpiece in the verandah and of course, a couple of socks and shoes!

Because of this natural habit of his, we had to keep our verandah, side doors and windows shut to restrict his entry.

He used to sleep in the day time in his cozy home, and the deepness of his sleep would put 'Kumbhakaran' to shame! With lots of coaxing, he might just open one-fourth of his eyelids. It was the sleep of a happy child, tired after long hours of play – mouth slightly open, showing his front pair of teeth.

Yes, he was just like a human child! My wife would scold him as he 'peed' on the cushion or suddenly slipped inside the quilt unnoticed. He would understand and react just like the other two children in the house – frightened but always ready for another prank. When 'mother' got irritated beyond her limits, Chickchick, along with his two companions, lost no time in hiding behind the door, in the jaali-verandah, under a table or in my lap – and pretend as though nothing had happened! Just like a human child, he could make out when 'mother' had got food for him that it was time to make peace.

With me, his relationship was different. By the time I returned from work in the evening, Chickchick was wide awake. As I entered, I would find him watching me with his dark, twinkling eyes. The next moment, he would glide onto my shoulder or head, pecking for his usual evening snacks – nuts and fruit pieces which I would hold out for him on my palm. Sometimes, I would keep these treats in my pockets and he enjoyed eating from there. In between, he would lick my arms and sometimes bite the tips of my fingers or earlobes.



After taking a shower, as I sat in front of my computer with my evening cup of tea, restless scratching was heard on the windows and on the door. Remarkably, he enjoyed human company. He would not accept being left alone outside, as he was an important member of the family! Naturally, he was let in. With some hopping and gliding, he would settle on my lap, making it his 'area'.

In the silence of midnight, when everyone was asleep, I would switch off my computer, collect Chickchick from the ruins of some CD covers or a stolen hanky and bid him "Goodnight."

We soon discovered that our Chickchick had a fascination for rum but disliked whisky! Whenever we had guests, we had to take special care to save our drinks from Chickchick or the other way around. His partiality for rum made my wife confident that he must have been a tea planter in his previous life!

By the second year, he was a full-grown male. We were planning to free him in the neighbourhood where he could find a mate and complete a normal life cycle, but destiny had planned otherwise...

We had to take special care to keep Chickchick warm in winter. His house was kept inside at night, covered with a warm piece of cloth. One December day, we lost our Chickchick... We were shocked and devastated as he was quite healthy and active and had shown no sign of any sickness...

Tears cannot bring back our dear ones. But often in the evening, long after he had left us for the next world, it seemed that we could hear him call, "Chickchick," and scratch on the window panes...

McLeod Russel Tour Championship 2014

~ Sunny Uthup, HO Kolkata



The 3rd edition of the McLeod Russel Tour Championship, PGTI's Year Ending Championship, was held at the prestigious Royal Calcutta Golf Club (RCGC) from 25 to 28 December 2014. The tournament's prize purse of ₹1.5 crores was the highest-ever for a domestic event in India.

The event saw the top 60 players from the Rolex Rankings 2014 compete for top honours. The tournament was a 72-hole stroke-play championship and there was no cut applied after 36 holes. All the players were guaranteed prize money. There were

also sponsor spots, and players who ply their trade on international tours added to the star quotient on display, namely – Arjun Atwal, Gaganjeet Bhullar, SSP Chowrasia, Rahil Gangjee and Himmat Rai.

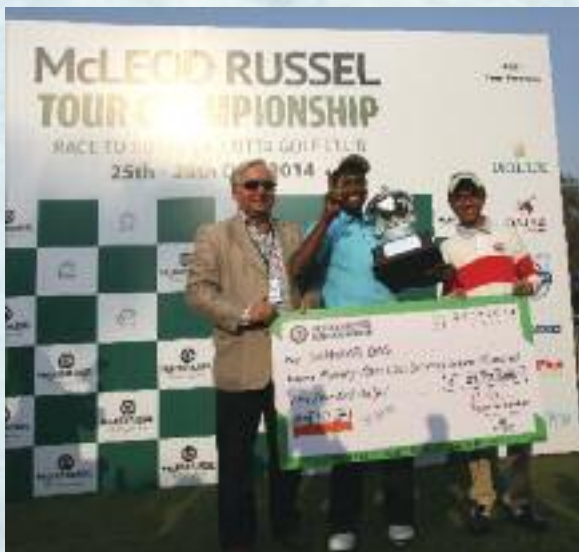
The Pro-Am event preceding the tournament was played on 23 and 24 December, and on the second day, the team comprising Rahil Gangjee (Pro), Master Akhil Khaitan, Sidarth Rai and Sunny Uthup were runners-up.

Local lad Shankar Das won the Championship posting a 4 day aggregate of 16 under par – winning by 3 shots from his nearest rivals. Gaganjeet Bhullar and Abhinav Lohan finished joint 2nd at 13 under par. An interesting statistic to be noted is that a local lad has won in 2012 and 2014 and finished runner-up in 2013!



A Jubilant Shankar Das

The Winner flanked by Mr R. Takru & Master Akhil Khaitan



L to R: Akhil Khaitan, Sunny Uthup, Rahil Gangjee, Mr R. Takru & Sidarth Rai



John Morice Cricket – 16 April 2015

Winners – South Bank



Man of the Match – Siddharth Thapa



The North Bank & South Bank Teams

MRIL Inter-Company T-20 Cricket – 12 April 2015



Man of the Match – Imtiaz Rahman



Winners – Team MRIL

Weddings

Debaleena, daughter of Supratim Chakraborty (HO Kolkata) and Shyamalika, wed **Aneek Dhar** on 1 December 2014



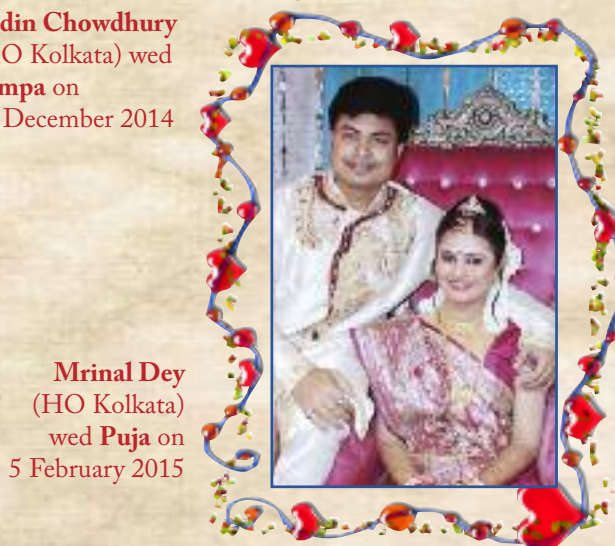
Vivek, son of V.K. Singh (HO Kolkata) & Reeta, wed **Nimisha** on 30 November 2014



Sudin Chowdhury (HO Kolkata) wed **Sampa** on 12 December 2014



Piyali Bhattacharjee (HO Kolkata) wed **Debal Chaudhuri** on 7 December 2014



Mrinal Dey (HO Kolkata) wed **Puja** on 5 February 2015



Priyanka Somani (HO Kolkata) wed **Abhishek Padia** on 5 February 2015

Samarjit Singh (Behali T.E.) wed
Navjeet Kaur on 7 December 2014



Darpan Saikia
(Monabarie T.E.) wed **Panchali** on
3 August 2014



Vapush Mann Singh (Koomsong T.E.)
wed **Kavita** on 26 September 2014



Yehoyada Banaki
(Mwenge T.E.) wed **Bisnus Biira**
on 1 November 2014



Rita Karungi (Ankole T.E.) wed
Joseph Bahame on 3 January 2015



Karan, son of Rajeev & Pallavi Mehrotra
(Baghjan T.E.) wed **Vijayeeta** on 5 October 2014



Pronoy Ray (Bargang T.E.)
wed **Shilpi** on 7 October 2014



Births



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. **MEDHANSH**, son of Abhijit Chetia & Jonali Gogoi, Keyhung T.E. 16 March 2014
2. **AASHREETA**, daughter of Manoranjan & Swati Talukdar, Dufflaghur T.E. 3 April 2014
3. **RIVAAN**, son of Amit & Prenu Rai Gurung, Rupajuli T.E. 18 October 2014
4. **NAMRATA**, daughter of Vinay & Kirpa Bist, Nya Gogra T.E. 17 November 2014
5. **RIDHAAN**, son of Siddharth & Suraksha Thapa, Beesakopie T.E. 10 February 2015
6. **XIAN ERIC**, son of Rickie & Yukyeng Tham, Keyhung T.E. 20 April 2015

MRIL Inter-Company Tennis – 5 April 2015



Winners:
Team MRIL 'A'

Pool Tournament at Quatro

The annual Pool Doubles Tournament was held in September 2014 at Quatro. As in the past, this year too there were many entries and all matches were watched and played with a lot of interest.



Winners: Mr Avijit Roy & Mr Sunny Uthup



Runners-Up: Mr Aditya Khaitan & Mr Rajeev Takru

MAIN PLATE



Winners: Mr K. K. Baheti & Mr Azam Monem



Runners-Up: Mr V.K. Singh & Mr Neville Betreen

BOWL PLATE

Farewell

We bid farewell to colleagues and wish them a contented retirement.



Dibyendu Pal Choudhury, HO Kolkata: 30 September 2014



Partha Sarathi Dowerah, Assam: 12 December 2014



Jayanta Jash, Assam: 12 December 2014



Dwipen Bordalai, Assam: 12 December 2014



Sanjeeb Deka, Assam: 12 December 2014



Ravinder Singh, Assam: 12 December 2014



Amar Pal Singh Shaw, Pfunda: 31 March 2015

Best Hospital Award



North Bank:
Pertabghur T.E.



South Bank:
Samdang T.E.



Golden Moments

Celebrating 30 years' service

GAUTAM BHATTACHARYA

NR SRINIVASAN | NEVILLE BETREEN

SRINIVAS CHAKRABORTY | AMAL KUMAR

BANERJEE | RAJEEV MEHROTRA

HARPREET SINGH GREWAL | ANAND WATS

SMARAN DEY MALLICK | SANEER GURUNG

DHRUVA GUHA SIRCAR



HONOURS





The Economic Times and the Association of Corporate Advisers & Executives (ACAE) Kolkata, organized the third edition of the Economic Times Bengal Corporate Awards on 14 February 2015 at the Taj Bengal hotel. Sixteen awards in six categories were conferred on companies and corporate personalities for outstanding achievement and their contribution to society.

The six categories were Best Financial Performance; Highest Job Creator; Fastest Growth; Innovation in Business; Indian Visionary Business Leader; and the **Lifetime Achievement Award**, which was conferred on the Chairman of the Williamson Magor Group, Mr B.M. Khaitan.

The Award was presented to Mr Khaitan by Sri Amit Mitra – Finance, Commerce and Industries Minister of West Bengal.

Inauguration of Handloom Project Showroom, Moran T.E.



The new showroom for the Company's Handloom Project products was inaugurated on 8 January 2015 by Dr Anil Saikia – Principal, Moran College – in the presence of the executives of the Company's Moran Circle estates and their families, the business community of Moran town, Moran Women's Society, the Chief of Oil India Ltd Moran, students from local institutions and the people of Moran town. This is the Company's second outlet, after the one at Behora T.E.

New Sports Pavilion at Corramore T.E.



Simon John Charles Le Bon, the English musician, best known as the lead singer, lyricist and musician of the band Duran Duran and its offshoot, Arcadia, is a big fan of Corramore tea.

He recently sponsored the construction of a Sports Pavilion for the workers of the estate.

Williamson Magor Group Ex-Planters' Get-Together, Gurgaon – 22 February 2015





~ Rupa Saikia

Set amidst verdant green surroundings and steeped in Ahom history, Attabarrie Tea Estate is but a stone's throw from the town of Demow on the national highway. The factory, Shiv temple and Burra Bungalow flank three sides of a lovely, huge pond, with a total area of 337,500 sq ft. This was dug during the reign of Ahom King Sukampha (1552 - 1603 AD) or 'Khora Roja' (Lame King), as he was popularly known. He was so christened owing to the damage to one of his feet, due

to a fall from his elephant while out on 'shikar' (hunt). The name of the garden was originally Athabarrie, stemming from the intensive plantations of gum trees in this area, the seeds of which were procured by the king while out on his travels, as the resin of this tree was very useful in fixing precious stones in jewellery, especially required in royal households at that time. However, with the advent of the British, the name changed to Attabarrie, as it is now known.

The Factory - Mirror Image!





The estate was established in the year 1864, and has changed many hands of ownership to date, with McLeod Russel India

Limited taking over from the Moran Tea Company in the latter part of the year 2007. It has a grant area of 780.78 Ha, of which 384.28 Ha are under tea plantation, the yield of the garden being 1958 kg/Ha. There are four Divisions here, namely – Attabarrie, Deroi, Kaliapani and Laujan. The HACCP certified factory produces 7,50,000 kg of tea per annum, of which 30,000 kg is orthodox tea. The small tea growers contribute another 2,00,000 kg annually. The factory is picturesquely situated on a hillock, this geographical feature of raised land coming about when the historical pond was dug. Two Middleton and two McIntosh sorters, in spic and span condition, are still in use in the factory, ever since the sorting system was introduced in the sixties. Attabarrie is ISO 22000 certified and the Rainforest Alliance certification was awarded in 2014.



The Sorters

Retired workers, Smti Janani Gogoi, Sri Puneswar Chaowra, Sri Dutiram Chaowra and Sri Buddha Chaowra remember how 4" pruning knives were used during their time, with only 84 bushes being pruned in a day, as compared to the 8"/9" knives used nowadays.

Retired Workers



Sri Dinabandhu Gogoi

Bullock carts were used to transport green leaf from the Divisions then. Sri Dinabandhu Gogoi, senior staff member, a veritable storehouse of information, mentioned a legend connected to the pond, commonly associated with the 'pukhuris' dug during the Ahom era – that of a golden boat which appeared with utensils in times of the villagers' need. When the pond was being cleaned during one of the British Sahab's time, a gilded vessel containing gold coins was supposedly found and handed over to him, for a sum of ₹5 only – a princely amount at the time. It was said that this area was so affluent during the Ahom king's rule, that 'Boreli' fish were captured from the pond, and released once they were fitted with tiny gold nose rings, as a measure of luck.

The Historic Tank & Shiv Temple



It needs to be mentioned that the present management has managed to save the age old trees bordering the sides of the pond by putting soil around the roots, preventing them from falling over. This water body has been beautifully maintained and one can see a lot of migratory



Sri Boga Tanti

birds frequenting it in the winter season, apart from the local birds which have made their homes around it. Fish roe has been released into the waters and as such, one finds an abundance of fish too.

Sri Boga Tanti, retired cook of the Burra Bungalow, mentioned that the previous Manager's Bungalow was a 'chang' type and was dismantled during the time of Mr J. Cousins when the present 'mati' bungalow was constructed.

The garden employs 1068 permanent and 500 temporary workers and has a staff strength of forty-eight. Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK) formulations are used extensively to control pests in the garden. This is made using cowdung, slaked lime and local plants with insect repellent properties among other ingredients, which has proved to be an effective



measure. The vermi-compost units provide organic manure and Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM) have been introduced for the overall benefit of the garden. The tea nursery has over 1,50,000 plants and further extensions have been done in 2014-15.



The Nursery





The seed-cracking shed has been very successful in its operations, both this and the nursery having been developed under MRIL.

There is a hospital with an OPD, looking after the wellbeing of the workers. Health camps organised here are open to the neighbouring villagers. In the recently held Laparescopic Tubectomy Camp, 41 garden workers and 41 villagers were treated. Similarly, a total of 129 people were screened and operated on for cataract during the recent Eye Camp, of which 78 were garden workers and the rest from the adjoining villages. Attabarrie has a 15-member Mothers' Club formed in 1999. They create awareness amongst the workers on sanitation, education, ill effects of child marriage, gambling and drinking, and also distribute iron tablets among pregnant workers in the Lines.

Road Safety Weeks are organised to impart knowledge on this important issue to the workers and the villagers. The management has played a leading role in creating



awareness about the environment, focusing on pollution, segregation of waste, and overall maintenance of the ecosystem in the schools, panchayats and labour lines. Dustbins are strategically placed, with different coloured bins for biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. Signboards prohibiting the felling of trees and hunting are displayed prominently all around the estate.



The workers here are mainly of the Hindu faith, with a lesser percentage of Christians. The main temple, located on the bank of the pond, was built in 1996, the total construction cost

being borne by the Attabarrie Division workers.



Attabarrie Shiv Temple

Dangoria Baba Dham



New idols have been donated by the Company in 2014. Close by lies the Dangoria Baba Dham, said to be more than a century old, started by a group of workers who had been granted that piece of land by one of the British managers of the time. The fifth generation of that group of workers still performs a puja in the month of May each year, for the wellbeing of the people of Attabarrie. The former bamboo and thatch structure was converted into a proper shed with a tin roof and iron posts by Mr Hut, a British executive. The first puja in the garden was Durga Puja in Attabarrie Divison, then Kali Puja was started in



Durga Puja Mandap



The Team:

Seated (L to R):

K. Jadon, S. Mitra (Manager),

Dr H. Dutta

Standing (L to R): N. Chawra,

B. Choudhury

Deroi Division, followed by Lakshmi Puja at Kaliapani Division. There are small temples in each Division where 'Bagaan Puja' is done at the start of the plucking season. There is a church nearby for the Christians as well.

Awards & Citations



Attabarrie T.E., through sheer hard work, have had the fruits of their labour recognised by the Company with the following Awards:



2008 – 2009: Overall Quality Award (South Bank)

2009 – 2010: Best Circle Award - Performance

2010 – 2011, 2012 – 2013 and 2013 – 2014: Overall Quality Award (South Bank)

As the garden strives for greater heights of excellence, they are wished the very best in their endeavour.



*The Memsahab's Guide
to Gracious Living*



~ Sukanto Ghosh
HO Kolkata

Bon Appetit!

I got my Hotel Management Diploma from IIHM Calcutta and joined the Taj group of hotels as a trainee in 1989. In 1997, I joined the erstwhile Bisnauth Tea Co. Ltd as an Officer, in charge of looking after the Company's guest houses and hospitality. It was while working here that I completed my Bachelors in Mass Communication & Journalism and then did my MBA with specialization in HR from Sikkim Manipal University.

Presently, I am working for McLeod Russel India Limited as a Manager in the P&A Department. In my 18 long years of service with the Company, I am indebted to the Management and all my immediate bosses for their encouragement and appreciation which gave me the strength to strive for the best. I have always had them by my side in times of difficulties. I still remember those words of wisdom and encouragement from our beloved Bara Sa'ab when I had newly joined – "Hard work always pays; if one is honest and true to his thoughts and work, it will definitely reap dividends" – and I have done just that.

To me, achieving the desired level of finesse in cooking involves three things – knowledge of basics, some amount of imagination and lots of love and passion for it.



Here are three recipes:

Baked Chicken Cacciatore

Preparation Time – 45 minutes

Preparation Method

Mix the flour with ½ teaspoon each of salt, black pepper powder and oregano. Heat oil in a frying pan and dust the chicken with the flour mix, add chicken and cook, turning, for about 5 minutes until browned. Remove to a baking dish big enough to hold all four pieces of chicken. While the chicken is browning, mix tomato sauce, wine, the remaining oregano, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Add garlic to pan drippings and sauté for 1 minute. Add bell peppers and mushrooms; cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato sauce mixture. Pour this over the chicken. Cover with foil and bake at 350°C for 30 minutes, until the chicken is tender. During the last 5 minutes remove the foil and sprinkle with the parmesan cheese.

Serve with Roasted Potatoes and Boiled Vegetables along with some Bread.

Ingredients

1 whole Chicken (1/1.2 kg approx., with skin) cut into 4 pieces

1 cup flour

1½ teaspoons dried oregano

1½ teaspoons salt

1½ teaspoons freshly ground black pepper

8 cloves garlic – minced

2 bell peppers – cored, seeded & diced

200 gm mushrooms – sliced

1 cup vegetable oil

1½ cups tomato sauce

1½ cups red wine

¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

Cheese Souffle

Preparation Time – 45 minutes (approximately)

Ingredients

1 tablespoon flour
35 gm butter
1 cup milk (warmed)
60 gm finely grated parmesan cheese
4 large eggs (yolks & whites separated)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Finely chopped parsley

Method

Prepare the basic mixture by stirring one generous tablespoon of flour into 35 gm butter melted in a heavy saucepan. Gradually add 1 cup of warmed milk, stirring until your mixture is quite smooth. Let this sauce cook very gently and slowly, stirring frequently. Now stir in the finely grated parmesan cheese (or if you prefer, Cheddar and Gruyère) and then the very thoroughly beaten yolks of four large eggs. Remove the mixture from the fire and continue stirring for a few seconds. Now add a seasoning of salt (always to be added after the cheese) and quite a generous amount of freshly ground pepper, plus the chopped parsley. This basic mixture can be made well in advance.

When the time comes to make the souffle, preheat the oven to 200°C/400°F. Butter your souffle dish (the size is important).

Whisk the whites of the eggs in a large, scrupulously dry and clean bowl, until they stand in peaks on the whisk and look very creamy. Tip half the beaten whites on top of the basic mixture, cutting it into the mixture with a palette knife, slowly rotating the bowl with your left hand, lifting rather than stirring the whole mass. Add the remainder of the whites in the same way. All this should take only a few seconds and as you pour the whole mixture, without delay, into the dish, it should look very bubbly and spongy. (If the whites have been over-beaten or rammed into the main mixture with a heavy hand, it will already begin to look flat.) Put it instantly into the oven.

As to timing, it depends so much upon the size and type of both the oven and the dish that it is misleading to give precise details. I can only say, as a general guide, that in the oven of a domestic gas cooker, this souffle is perfectly cooked at 200°C/400°F in 15 to 25 minutes.

Note: Butter the inside of your soufflé dish lightly all over before pouring in the mixture for baking.



Strawberry Cheesecake

Ingredients

For the Crust – 10/12 Digestive biscuits
2 tablespoons butter
For the Filling – 1 cup milk
½ cup condensed milk
1 tablespoon cornflour
25 gm gelatine
100 gm cottage cheese
250 gm hung yogurt
½ cup sugar
Juice of 1 lime
6/7 strawberries chopped and 2/3 for garnishing
Most importantly – 150/200 gm of Philadelphia Cream Cheese.
Note: I have also tried our very own Indian Cheese Spreads (Plain) in place of Philadelphia Cream Cheese and the result was quite good.



Method

Crush the biscuits to a coarse powder and mix it in a bowl with the melted butter. Put this mixture in an 8" loose bottomed ring mould. Press the mixture lightly into the mould and place it in the refrigerator to set.

Heat the milk in a pan, add the condensed milk and mix. Dissolve the cornflour in a little milk and mix it with the hot milk, stirring continuously till the mixture thickens. Let it cool.

Soak the gelatine in a little water for some time and then heat it over the fire so that the gelatine dissolves. (You can add a little more water at this time if required.)

In a blender, add all the ingredients for the filling except the gelatine and strawberries. Blend gently but thoroughly. Once done, mix in the gelatine and then add the chopped strawberries. Pour this mixture into the prepared tin. Refrigerate for 3 to 4 hours, the first hour being in the freezer section. Take the cake out of the mould by pushing it up from the bottom. Decorate with the remaining strawberries.



SOLAR POWER PLANT - ATTAREEKHAT T.E.

“GREENER ENERGY, BETTER TOMORROW”

~ Ranjeev Dutta
Attareekhat T.E.

Solar Energy

The source of all the energies in this world is the sun. All the energies we utilize around us every day are directly or indirectly derived from the sun. Whenever there is a transformation of energy from one form to another, there is a loss and some by-products are created. These by-products mostly consist of various forms of carbon which are released in nature and create the source of pollution. In India 870 grams of CO₂ is emitted per unit of electricity generation. (Source: Greenpeace)

There are two ways of directly harnessing solar energy into usable forms: a) **Solar-Thermal**: where we use the heat coming from the sun to create power. b) **Solar-Photo Voltaic**: where we use a part of solar radiation to directly generate electricity using semiconductor based Solar Modules.

The Solar-Photo Voltaic electricity generation is absolutely

free of CO₂ or any other greenhouse gas emission, resulting in a cleaner environment.

Photo-Voltaic Modules: Energy Generation

The conversion of solar radiation to electricity is done by the use of solar cells. The solar cells available for the purpose are categorized into various types depending upon the materials used and the construction process. Mainly there are three types of solar panels: 1. Monocrystalline 2. Polycrystalline 3. Amorphous/Thin film.

The 100 KW Solar Power Plant at Attareekhat T.E.

The plant was designed, erected and commissioned by Vikram Solar Pvt Ltd to provide uninterrupted power supply for the estate’s domestic requirement.

The project was initiated in February 2014 and was successfully commissioned on 7 May 2014.



The plant comprises 3 main components:

1. Solar PV modules

Silicon Polycrystalline 250 Watt Peak modules, each consisting of 60 cells arranged in 10x6 patterns. Degree of inclination: 25O; Total no. of modules: 400; Directional Facing: South East

Dimension and rating of each module/panel:

Length – 1640 mm; Breadth: 982 mm; Thickness: 36 mm

Rated power: 250 Watt (Peak)

Open Circuit Voltage: 37.08 Volts

Short Circuit Current: 8.53 Amps; Fill Factor: 79.17%

Arrangement: 16 solar modules are connected to create one string and 25 strings are connected to six Array Junction Boxes; these AJBs are then connected to two Main Junction Boxes. The input supply from these MJBs goes into the inverter PCU.

2. NeoWatt Sunbird 3000 Inverter System

NeoWatt Sunbird 3000 is a three phase bi-directional MPPT based inverter/charge controller system which can operate parallel to an AC input source.

The main components of this PCU are:

- Maximum Power Point Tracking based Charge Controller
- Insulated Gate Bipolar Transistor
- Rectifier
- Bus Bar
- Dot Matrix Display



3. Battery bank

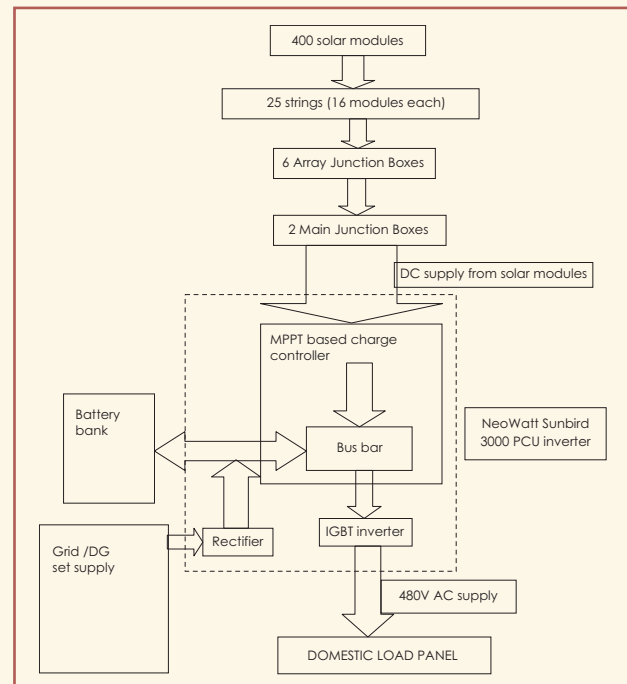
The battery bank consists of 240 Lead-Acid batteries each of rating 2 volts, 1000 Ampere/hour. These batteries are connected in series to create an output voltage of 480V.

Operation Mechanism

In order to provide uninterrupted power supply to the domestic load of the estate, the backup power of Grid/DG set was attached to the battery bank.

The idea is that, when solar radiation is high enough i.e. during the day time, the solar modules will supply the load demand and charge the battery as well. The DC supply will go through a MPPT charge controller and be fed directly to the battery bank, then go through one IGBT inverter to convert into AC supply and feed the load as well. When the solar radiation is not there i.e. at night, the battery bank will supply power to load through the same IGBT inverter. If there is no sunshine to charge the battery i.e. in case of rain, cloudy weather etc and the battery gets discharged, it will take power automatically from the Grid supply or DG set, whichever is available, through a rectifier. This entire switching operation is automatic and controlled by the PCU itself.

The following diagram shows how it works:



Inverter Panel



From August 2014, the option for the import of power from the Grid or DG set was removed and the output power was given directly to the main bus bar of the system, through a KWH meter. This was done for better observation of the plant's performance and output.

Currently the solar modules charge the battery to a minimum level and the rest of the power is given into the main bus bar of the power system, where it can be utilized in any part of the factory or domestic load.

Performance

The plant has been generating energy from 7 May 2014 to date uninterruptedly, but with a variation of sunshine especially during the rainy season, the generation varies abruptly.

The month-wise total units generated are as follows:

MONTH	KWH Generation
May 2014	3518 units
June 2014	3625 units
July 2014	7388 units
August 2014	6013 units
September 2014	5852 units
October 2014	6650 units
November 2014	3183 units
December 2014	2773 units
January 2015	2022 units
TOTAL	41024 units

Regarding the financial aspects, the plant has generated electricity worth Rs. 3,56,908/- to date. (Considering average unit rate of Rs. 8.70/Kwh as per ASEB billing for F/Y 2014/15.)

On the other hand, considering the environmental aspects, the plant has generated electricity without any harmful emission into the environment. Approximately 36 ton of carbon dioxide emission has been averted.

Future Aspects & Scope for Improvement

It has been only a year since the system was installed and as it is still under observation, it is too early to comment on the performance and reliability of the system on a long-term basis.

However, at the moment this system is capable of supplying power only to the main Division of the estate.

The system can be expanded to 200KW to be able to feed both the main Division and the out Division of the estate. The battery bank capacity has to be increased in accordance with that.

This system is connected to the estate's main bus bar for in-house usage only. However, if the system can be expanded to a capacity where the generation exceeds the demand, the excess amount can be supplied to the Grid at a much higher rate than the consumption rates.

Final Verdict

This is a 'first of its kind' project for this Company as well as for the tea industry. This project is a step towards the future of energy and towards sustainable growth. The pathway to a cleaner and greener world of tomorrow starts from here and we all hope this initiative will lead the way to a better future...





The Historical Tank at Rajmai

~ Diganta Rajkhowa
 Rajmai T.E.

The 'pukhuri' at Rajmai, one of many man-made tanks built during the reign of the mighty Ahoms, is situated around 100 metres away from NH 37, inside the boundary of Rajmai T.E. According to the history of Assam, this enormous tank was built by Ahom king Sudangpha around 1398 AD, in memory of his mother. ('Rajmao' means 'king's mother'.) Later, the entire area came to be known as 'Rajmai'.

History says that King Sudangpha's respect towards his mother had increased manifold after he learned that his mother, the youngest queen, had been exiled to a place called Habung by King Tyao Khamti and the elder queen on false accusations. The exiled queen died after giving birth to a baby boy who was brought up by Brahmins at Habung. The king died childless, and there being no other prince to ascend the throne, the ministers traced the exiled queen's child and brought the 15-year-old to the capital, Charaideo, where they pronounced him the next Ahom king, Sudangpha. During his reign (1397 – 1407) he built the Rajmai 'pukhuri' and Rajmai 'Ali' (road) to immortalize his mother. Rajmai Ali connects Rajmai to Nitaipukhuri cutting across NH 37 and the Dehing River.

It is interesting to note that King Sudangpha established his capital at Saragua, barely 10 km away from Rajmai, where an out Division of the estate existed till around the mid-1950s. It was abandoned when a large part of the plantation was washed away by the flood waters of the Brahmaputra. A few graves (maidams) of Ahom kings are preserved at Saragua by the Archeological Department of Assam. Saragua also has a bird sanctuary, a

known habitat for migratory birds, which is protected by the Forest Department.

An amazing aspect of the Rajmai tank is that the water level was maintained by a self-operating valve allowing ingress of water through an underground canal connected to the Brahmaputra. Unfortunately, this system has become defunct now.

Measuring 220 yards in length and 190 yards in breadth, it is probably the third largest historical tank in Sibsagar district after the Sibsagar and Joysagar tanks. The water is never used by local residents for any domestic purposes; it is only used for religious rituals as the tank is revered by all.

The tank is a prominent aquatic ecosystem in which major species of hydrophytic flora like water lilies, lotus and hyacinths grow. It is also a habitat for some species of aquatic birds such as fishing eagles and pelicans that feed on the fish found in abundance in the pond, as no one is allowed to fish there. Pani Dihing Bird Sanctuary which was declared a Wild Life Sanctuary in 1996 is situated only 10 km away from the tank.

This historical tank, an architectural marvel of the Ahom era, is protected by the estate and every care is taken to preserve the flora and life forms, and to maintain the natural ecosystem.





~ Richard Bangirana
Mwenge Central



Supporting Primary Education at McLeod Russel, Uganda

The motto for one of Uganda's Primary Schools goes "*akati kainikwa kakiri kabisi*", meaning, "a stick can only be moulded to the desired shape when still young." The same is internalized by McLeod Russel in Uganda by dedicating CSR commitments to education and health. In the last five years, new Nursery Schools have been constructed at Kiko and Mwenge; Primary Schools facilitated with new classroom blocks; and existing buildings refurbished at Ankole, Mwenge, Muzizi, Kisaru and Bugambe.

The History of Primary Education in Uganda

Formal education in Uganda was started in the 19th century by missionaries from Europe. Schools were constructed by religious institutions, most of them in the 20th century. It came to pass that primary schools were started on the premises of religious institutions and then handed over to the government as they grew. More recently the Government of the Republic of Uganda has taken over responsibility from inception, often supported by donor agency funds.

Some plantation establishments started primary schools to cater for workers' children and to assist the community. At Ankole and Mwenge, these primary schools are still located on Company land. At Kiko and

Muzizi, these were shifted just beyond the estate boundary for expansion reasons and for the community to exercise more responsibility, as MRUL management maintains appropriate support. In both cases, initial construction for relocation was borne by the Company.

Current Responsibility Over Schools in Uganda

The Government of Uganda, since independence in 1962, took over responsibility of schools from founding institutions. Compromises have been made with regard to administration of these schools, to maintain founding institutions in managerial roles. For a number of primary schools located on or near MRUL estates, the respective estate is recognized as the foundation body.

The Uganda Government currently has a policy of Universal Primary Education (UPE). When introduced in the last decade, payment of school fees in 'public schools' was regulated to make it compulsory for all children of school-going age to attend school. This created massive enrolment, which



A Classroom in Kyabaseke Primary School, Bugambe

overwhelmed the capacity of schools in terms of infrastructure and trained teachers. MRUL, witnessing this situation, stepped in to support the policy at schools near the estates.

The Historical Involvement of Companies before MRUL

Agricultural Enterprises Limited (AEL) was established as a para-statal enterprise in the 1960s, and what are now MRUL estates were established. Responsibility for schools constructed on these government owned tea estates was seen as consistent with the government's mandate for socio-economic development.

Later in the 1990s, the government decided to advance into a private sector-led economy, which saw a number of state-owned enterprises privatized. AEL was one such, changing to James Finlay Uganda Limited and in due course, to McLeod Russel Uganda Limited.

The privatization of tea plantations led to a change in focus that saw primary schools left entirely as the government's responsibility, with no, or at best negligible, support from the companies that existed at that time.

MRUL's Initiative in the Development of Primary Schools

When McLeod Russel took over in 2010, a careful exercise identified key Corporate Social Responsibility areas

Kyabaseke Primary School



in the fields of education and health. The first two projects undertaken in 2011 were the refurbishment of a Primary School near Bugambe (Kyabaseke Primary School) and construction of a new classroom block at Muzizi.

The first, Kyabaseke Primary School, was initially constructed from a portion of workers' tax paid to the government and appropriated for community development. However, by the time McLeod Russel took over, classroom structures were dilapidated and run down, clearly an uncondusive learning environment.

At Muzizi, there was a primary school in the neighbourhood with insufficient classrooms. Muzizi T.E. had volunteered the workers' social hall to double as a classroom during the day. In 2011 a two-classroom block was constructed in the main school premises, leaving the workers' social hall as a designated and customized leisure facility for estate workers and dependants.

Thereafter, and in a phased manner, primary schools were refurbished at Ankole, Mwenge and Kisaru Tea Estates. At Ankole and Mwenge, schools are situated on Company land.

Early Childhood Development Centers (ECDCs)

Many employees live with families on site, and young children require professionally guided early childhood development. On most of our estates, these were attended to in senior staff clubs or workers' social halls. On several occasions, children were displaced to make room for some Company activities. In some cases, shelter was provided under trees in the compound.

In a planned and phased manner, construction of dedicated nursery schools was begun and soon completed at Kiko and Mwenge, which the children of managerial staff, junior staff, workers and the estates' immediate neighbourhood, attend.

Benefits of this Support

McLeod Russel's investment in primary education has increased confidence among employees and created a sense of belonging. The neighbouring communities, who also benefit from this infrastructure, hold MRUL in high esteem. While the

New Classroom at Muzizi



government has a policy on Universal Primary Education (UPE), provision of sufficient infrastructure is a difficult and sometimes incomplete task. Support from corporates, such as McLeod Russel, is indeed much appreciated.

The Journey Ahead

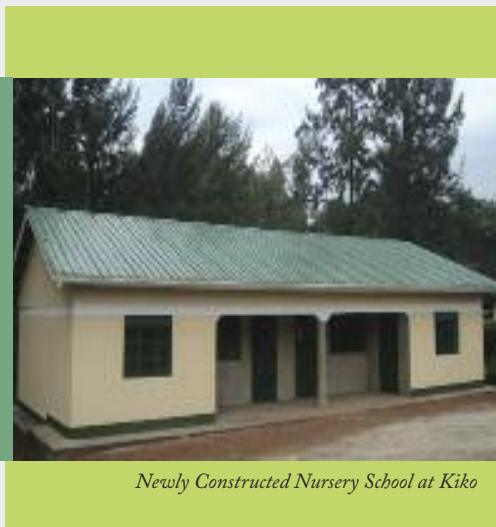
The requirements for providing quality education are definitely numerous. With Uganda's high birth rates and developing economy, ever-growing infrastructure is required. As a business organization, MRUL has tried its best and development planning continues to designate specific CSR projects on estates, subject to business exigencies and affordability.



Children's Christmas Party



Refurbished Primary School at Ankole



Newly Constructed Nursery School at Kiko



Mwenge Nursery School Graduation



How I joined Tea

~ Jayanta Jash, Kolkata



After graduating B. Com (Hons) from St Xavier's College, Kolkata, and qualifying as a Chartered Accountant, I proceeded to work for A. F. Ferguson & Co for three years and thereafter for five years with Indian Aluminium Company Ltd at Kolkata.

Responding to an advertisement for the post of Group Accountant for a tea company, I arrived at the MRIL office on Shakespeare Sarani. An interview was arranged on the first day with Mr J. C. Verma (who is no more with us today). He asked me several questions and answered them all himself before I could even start speaking. Fantastic interview!

The very next day I was sent to Mr N. N. Atal for the second round of interviews. Mr Atal, instead of asking me anything, first enquired if I had any question to ask him. I was not at all prepared for this. In this utterly bewildered state I asked one or two very elementary questions about the Company. Each time he said, "It is a fair question!"

So, I was selected as Group Accountant – North Bank, with effect from 1 June

1985. The very same evening, I received a phone call from the MRIL office saying Mr R. A. Eastment was in Kolkata and was desirous of meeting me in the evening at the Penthouse. All went very well.

So, one Saturday evening in summer, at around 7 pm, I arrived at Balipara having driven from Kolkata for two days, covering 1100 km, in my Ambassador car with my Bengali driver. No one was available at Balipara when I arrived, as the Director was visiting the estates. Thankfully, a bungalow was kept vacant for me.

Imagine reaching a tea estate at night straight from Kolkata all alone and for the very first time! After dinner, the chowkidar explained in detail about the ghost which visited the Bungalow daily. My driver's eyes really popped and we both decided to quit – simply go back after informing the office once it opened on Monday. (My dad had instructed me never to leave a posting without informing my superiors.)

The next day being Sunday, nobody was in sight. At around 10 am, a Bearer came on a cycle and delivered a hand written invitation to a party at the VA's Bungalow to meet Mr N. N. Atal. I enjoyed the evening and the day passed... just another day left before going back to Kolkata.

Once Mr Atal had left for Kolkata the next day, my rigorous training started immediately with Mr R.A Eastment. What I learnt is priceless. After a week, the driver left and I gradually settled down in my new environment. Within the next three or four days,

Mr Eastment appointed Sucheta (presently at Pertabghur) as my driver. Thus started my career in Tea and Mr Eastment took every care to settle me in.

Those days I used to visit our Dooars estates from Balipara. There I met another amazing personality, Mr Ashok Kaul, and his late wife, Mrs Ranjana Kaul – a magnificent lady. I will never forget the way they received me as a young assistant.

I really enjoyed working with both the VAs – Mr Eastment and Mr Kaul. Two years later, Mr Eastment retired and slowly my trips to the Dooars also became less frequent.

In the meanwhile, my wife and son joined me. We had a fantastic time driving here and there with Sucheta. He took us on long journeys to Shillong and Guwahati frequently.

MRIL joined the WM Group in 1988 and after four years at Balipara, my first transfer was to Moran T.E. and thereafter to Itakhooli T.E. I had a short six months' stay at Borengajuli. During that brief period, George (Ambooken) took a personal interest in training me to drive across the river. One day while manoeuvring through raging torrents, I almost lost the Gypsy. Needless to mention, my 'trainer' was indeed next to me! Thankfully, a few fishermen came to our rescue.

Within six months I was transferred to the Dooars for five years, and thereafter, I spent a year at Pertabghur before reaching Margherita via Hunwal... now, I'm finally back in Kolkata... and life has come full circle.

Memories of my Tea life

~ Sanjeeb Deka, Guwahati

In 1977, I joined McLeod Russell as a young chap, full of enthusiasm and energy, to begin a new life. Never did I imagine that this life would leave us with so many memories hard to forget. I was kind of job hunting, when my brother asked me if I was interested in joining Tea. My passion and interests were very different at the time and my main focus was only on cricket. I had represented Assam in the Ranji Trophy tournament at a very early age – when I was just seventeen. I played with quite a few test players while representing the state cricket team. However, I soon realized that cricket would only be short-lived and I had to find a proper job. I applied for a position in Tea and to my surprise I was called for an interview in Kolkata. My interview lasted for only ten odd minutes and the main questions asked were about cricket. Soon after, I was offered the job in Tea.

I joined at Monabarie T.E. under Mr R.A. Eastment and shared my bungalow with two other young chaps; however they were a few years senior. They were none other than Mr Partha Dowerah and Mr Nandu Ganguli. Being fresh off the boat, they decided to tell me ‘haunted’ stories about the bungalow and Tea in general. The same night I heard a knock on my door; I ran for my life and went straight to one of their rooms. I lived in fear for a couple of days, only realizing later that the ghosts were none other than my house mates themselves!

Life went on and most of my time, other than in the factory and the garden, was well spent at the club bar and playing games representing various Tea clubs. I played in the Company’s John Morice cricket match during my entire career in Tea, representing both South Bank and North Bank, depending on my posting, and happened to be the batsman who scored the first century in this tournament. I still remember doing all my ‘kamjari’ on my cycle; it was my favorite mode of transport and I was known as ‘Cycle Deka’.

Manju joined me a few years later, in 1981, and we were blessed with two beautiful children thereafter. Dora was born in 1982 and Diego in 1986. Both my children were coincidentally born in my first

garden, Monabarie. Both Dora and Diego are currently in Melbourne, Australia.

Manju became actively involved in flower shows and catering for Club Meets. We were both avid travellers and often made impromptu decisions to travel to different parts of the state with our friends and colleagues. Picnics and expeditions were always on our cards.

I got my billet at Tezpore & Gogra T.E. after working for 14 years as an Assistant Manager. It was a fantastic posting as both our children went to the Assam Valley School which was very close to us. We were there for 4 years after which I was transferred to Mijicajan T.E. After 5 years at Mijicajan, followed by another 6 years at Koomsong T.E., I finally completed my Tea journey at Samdang T.E.

37 years in Tea have flown by so quickly. It’s hard for me to comprehend where these years have disappeared.

“Sahab chai laga diya”, is a distant memory. Now I am the Jharuwala-cum-Bearer and Manju, the Bawarchi – although she is slacking a bit with the cooking!! My children miss the ‘nimbu pani’ prepared by the Tea bearers. Guwahati has taught us the reality of life in the past few months. It is a busy life and a crazy world, nowhere near the luxury of life in Tea, but Life goes on and we were fortunate to experience the two sides of the world. I am now looking forward to playing my next innings.





Deepa Agashe and Krushnamegh Kunte are Ecologists and Evolutionary Biologists at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bengaluru, who study the diversification of life on earth, and the means to preserve biodiversity in tropical and developing countries such as India.



~ Dr Deepa Agashe &
Dr Krushnamegh Kunte

Habitat Islands in the Midst of Tea

Each day, forests blink out across the world as a result of human activities, carrying with them an incredible number of unique species. Little patches of forest that linger within human settlements thus become ever more precious, offering hope that we can nurture marvelous animals, plants and microbes for years to come. Northeast India is one of the most species-rich spots on the earth, making it especially important to preserve and nurture forested pieces of land here.

With our friends Arjun and Narmada and their little daughter Saira, we took a break from our hectic lives as scientists and visited Bordubi T.E. in Assam for an enchanted ten days in December 2014. Our Christmas and New Year holiday was spent in style with Arjun's aunt and uncle – our gracious hosts Sarita and Ramanuj Dasgupta. We spent the mornings and evenings savouring the sumptuous food, enjoying their generous hospitality.

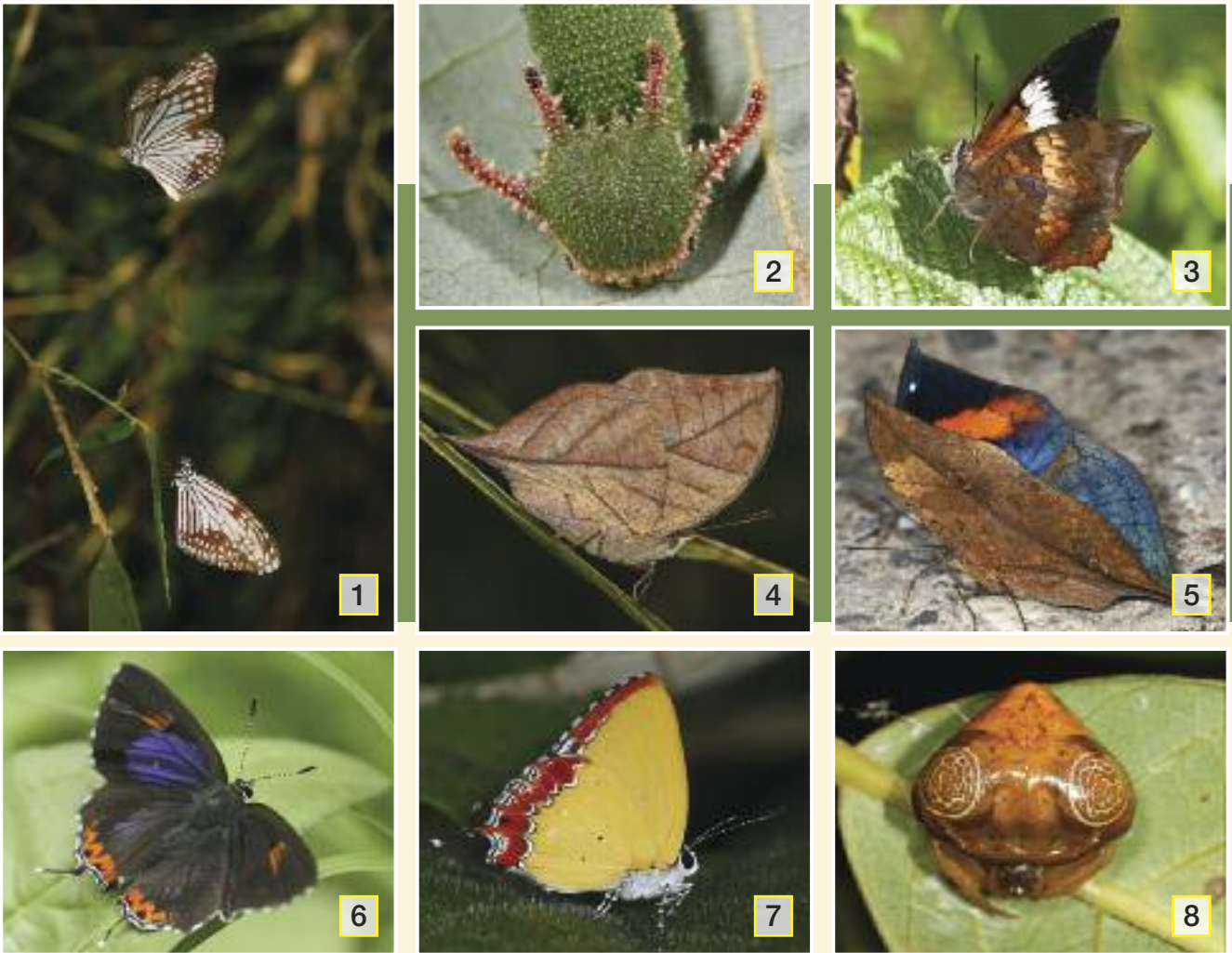
However, being ecologists, we were also very keen to explore the nearby forests brimming with exciting wildlife. Unfortunately, the socio-political situation at the time meant that we couldn't venture far from Bordubi. Luckily, one evening we had a chance to visit the Bamboo Bari in Koomsong T.E. – a small piece of bamboo forest preserved amid an ocean of tea bushes. The smell of this forest is still fresh in our minds! We had just about an hour of fading daylight, walking on damp soil thick with years of fallen bamboo leaves. Dragonflies and butterflies were turning in

for the night as the bamboo rustled in the gentle breeze. It was absolutely magical to inhale the forest and watch it fold away its secrets for another night.

Early the next morning we dove right into the bamboo thicket, watching still-snoozing dragonflies and butterflies as we went along. As the sun became stronger we came out to the edge of the thicket, watching butterflies get busier as they absorbed the sun's warmth.

Most of the butterflies were common species, but no less beautiful to watch. Towards noon all we had to do was walk on the paths along the edge of the thicket to see hundreds of butterflies flitting around! Highlights included the Orange Oakleaf – a large, handsome butterfly that superbly resembles a dead leaf so birds wouldn't eat it; the Purple Sapphire, a beautiful tiny jewel; and the Glassy Tigers that smoothly sailed through the air along the forest edge.

On our last day at Bordubi we explored another patch of greenery in Koomsong, which turned out to be a regenerating forest. We spent a couple of hours looking around for butterflies and dragonflies, but the pickings were slim. However, just as we decided to return to Bordubi, we happened to spot a stunning caterpillar on a leaf – it was the Tawny Rajah! It had four horn-like projections on its large head, and with its slow, graceful movements looked like a dragon weaving a magic spell. Once we knew what to look for, we spotted dozens more caterpillars. Along the way, we found ants building curious nests with plastered



(1) A pair of the Glassy Tigers, a courting male hovering over a female (2) Caterpillar of the Tawny Rajah (*Charaxes Bernardus*) (3) The female Tawny Rajah that emerged from the pupa made by the caterpillar (4 & 5) Orange Oakleaf spoiling its masquerade by revealing bright colours on its upper side (6 & 7) Male Purple Sapphire (*Heliophorus Epicles*) (8) An unidentified “googly-eyed” spider, one of many mysterious denizens of the Bamboo Bari

bits of dried vegetation at the base of the leaves of a small bush. This was interesting because the nests were unlike typical ant nests in the ground or in trees that most of us know. We also found a little spider with a stunning googly-eyed pattern on its back, and an abandoned praying mantis egg case with beetle larvae inside. These little discoveries of fantastic insects made our day.

As we travel across the country for our work, we witness the myriad pressures under which our forests and wildlife are crumbling. It was therefore comforting that Koomsong has allowed and even encouraged these wonderful patches of bamboo and regenerating forests to grow in the midst of the tea estate. As urbanites, we found peace and excitement in walking amidst these little pieces of scattered forest. We also marveled how these habitat islands harboured a

remarkable diversity of plant and animal species, and provided so many ecosystem services to the surrounding people who work so hard in the tea estates.

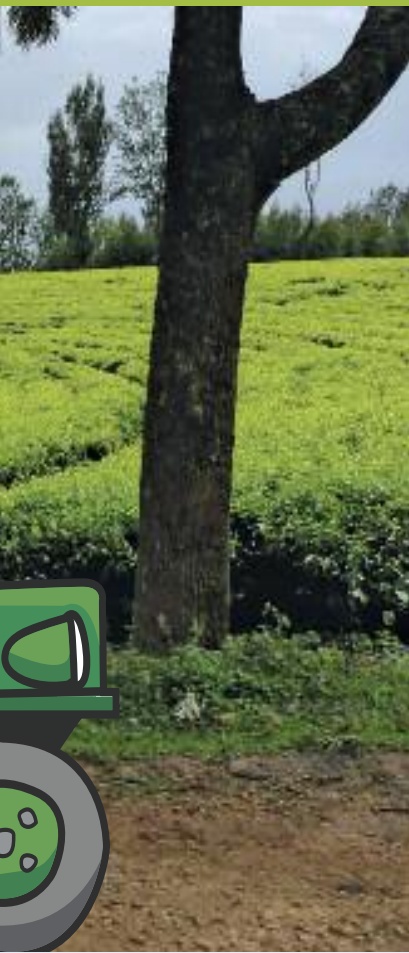
We believe the Bamboo Bari represents a beautiful example of how humans, nature and wildlife can co-exist even in an intensively managed ecosystem such as a tea estate. We hope that such small patches of forest will be allowed to grow stronger in other intensive agricultural ecosystems in India. Such patches will not only connect populations of wild plants and animals – helping them to persist in an increasingly fragmented landscape – but also allow us to preserve India’s long-standing culture of respecting and caring for nature around us. For this reason, we look forward to a new culture of bamboo baris taking root as India fiercely marches towards modernization.

Back 'Seat' Riding & A Bottle of Whisky...



~ Junior Dagar
Chuapara T.E.

Having been born in Tea, my memories of life on the estates dates back to my childhood. Life then was definitely better with no TV or Internet (in the office) and HO believed the figures sent by post. On joining my job fresh out of college, from a 'Baba' I became a 'Sahab'. The initial years were very, very tough with me shrinking from 78 kg to less than 59 kg! It was work, work and only work with barely six hours of sleep in a day and I never got to see the club for the first six months. The Senior Assistant was the de facto Manager; the instructions were – planting in the morning, the field during the day and the withering trough or irrigation at night, depending on the time of the year. It was virtually a 15/16 hour job. I assure you of one thing – the boys today would not survive this. We were trained to be strong – mentally and physically – and reporting sick, no matter what, was only for the weak. I consider us Planters a breed apart and working in McLeod Russel gives us the royal Blue Blood. Looking back today I would not have had it any other way and do not have a day of regret. After so many years of service



my wife and I are now thinking of investing in a house.

I'd like to share two anecdotes.

Gidyup

One late evening at Bishnauth Gymkhana Club after having exceeded our quota of whisky, we decided to hit the then famous 'Pandit Dhaba' located close to Bargang. The Senior Assistant to whom the Jeep belonged took the wheel and the other Senior Assistant the front seat. (I shall call them G and D respectively.) My other three colleagues quickly stuffed themselves tight on the back seat leaving me no options, but, to my misfortune, to sit behind, on top of the spare wheel! We decided to take

the back road through Mijicaijan T.E. which had a broken wooden bridge. Our journey started with the word 'Gidyup' uttered by D to which G's Jeep responded with a start as if it were actually a horse. Each time, the word 'Gidyup' made G press the accelerator and the Jeep would gather more speed. The road being broken, I kept jumping on, and with, the wheel and jack at the back, which were unfortunately not bolted to the body. My cries for help were all drowned by the 'Gidyups'. By the time we approached the broken bridge the Jeep had gathered too much speed to stop, so with one more loud 'Gidyup' the 'horse' jumped over the broken bridge. Yes, Sirs and Ma'ams, believe me it did and thank God! There is a saying often repeated over the bar, "Sharabio Ko Bhagwan Dekhta Hai." (God looks after the Drunks.)

Thank God this came true for all of us that day. At the end of my ordeal, once we reached the Dhaba, my colleagues pulled me (or what was left of me!) from the back and it took all three of them to separate me from the spare tyre, which I was holding on to for dear life with my fingers embedded in the grooves.

Black Label

Before going on Annual Leave once, I decided to leave my precious old bottle of 'Black Label' whisky with my friend and colleague just in case my bungalow was burgled in my absence. Those days, this particular whisky was not easily available and was reserved for the Advisors or Directors. On my return from leave I asked my friend to return my whisky. He delayed for a couple of days and then confirmed my fear, that it had been accidentally consumed! To add to my dismay he had shared it with another twit, who did not know the difference between whisky and brandy – a total waste! After one month of continuous verbal abuse and the story being repeated at every gathering to embarrass my guilty 'ex-friend', he finally gathered the courage to buy me a replacement which was easily worth a month's salary. He insisted we head to Bishwanath Charali town to buy the whisky and said there was one particular shop where it should be available. On reaching the shop he inquired from the owner if he had Black Label. The shopkeeper replied that he would have to check, returning after some time and confirming, to my amazement, that Black Label was in stock! Then my ex-friend, with a sly glance and a taunting "hmmm" in my direction, authoritatively ordered the owner to bring the bottle. The latter returned with a bottle of Black Label - Strong Beer. To this day, I haven't forgiven my (former) friend.

Life in the plantations is getting tougher with the ever fluctuating market, the changing weather patterns and the work culture, but we Blue Bloods will not only survive but thrive with time.

Cheers.



~ Inderjit Dutta
Dehing T. E.

The Singphos



North-east India is considered one of the most culturally diverse regions of the world, being a land inhabited by more than 200 fascinating tribes. One among such is the Singpho tribe. Though their origin is not anthropologically authenticated, legend has it that their abode was in the hills of Singra-Boom in Tibet. They migrated from there in groups to China, Burma (now Myanmar) and north-east India.

It has already been established that Robert Bruce, the Englishman who discovered tea in Assam, came to know of its existence after he was offered a concoction of the beverage by the then Singpho King, Bessa Gaum, in early 1823. As the story goes, when the British East India Company, by the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, annexed Upper Burma to Assam, the Company made a similar treaty with the tribal chiefs of different clans to start tea cultivation while also paying a royalty for the same, this practice being since discontinued.

The Singphos are divided into a number of clans, each under a Chief known as a Thu-Gam. Like other tribes, they live in 'Chang Ghars' (houses standing on stilts), also known as 'Pinrang Intahk'. The women traditionally wear the Bukang (Mekhela), the chest being covered with the Nungwat or Methoni and around their waist they drape the Chinket. They also wear coloured turbans called Bum-Bam. Women often dress in black jackets with silver decorations during festive occasions and don silver ornaments. The men too are sartorially distinctive. They wear the Lasababu-Bupa or Baka (a length of cloth draped around the waist).

The Singpho people are Buddhists by religion. They celebrate the 'Sangken' festival in the month of April and a community festival every year in the month of February known as 'Shapawng Yawng Manao Poi'. This festival is designed to bring the Singpho people scattered across Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and parts of Myanmar and China, on one platform.

Meeting The Present Singpho King

In the process of writing this article on this intriguing tribe, a few of us decided to meet the present Singpho king. We ventured out on a journey towards Ledo town, driving through Ledo T. E. to reach a village called Bisa Gaon. The lingering mist, with sunshine filtering through the 'takau' trees (Chinese Palm) that adorn the road on both sides, paved the way to



Shapawng Yawng Manao Poi Festival



Eco-Lodge at Inthong Village





Bisa Roja with his Ceremonial Silver Sword



Singpho Dishes

a Chang Ghar, where the present Singpho king, Bisa Roja or Rajkumar Bisa Nong Singpho, resides.

Bisa Nong Singpho is a man of few words but he made us feel welcome with his graciousness and hospitality, though initially, he was somewhat wary of us. He gave us an overview of the Singpho community and the impact of modern society on the tribe's way of life. In the meantime we were greeted by his beautiful daughter, Bisa Kai, who offered us 'Phalap', a naturally grown and processed tea made only by the Singpho people. It had a wonderful smoky flavour and tasted like no other tea I had sampled earlier.

This journey itself left an indelible impact on us, turning out to be one of the unforgettable chapters in our lives.

Tea and The Singphos

The Singphos produce a unique type of tea that is totally different from the conventional brew we drink. Called 'Phalap', it is a completely naturally grown tea, hand processed by the Singpho women in accordance with tradition. They pluck tender leaves which are then boiled and spread out in the sun to dry, before exposing them to the night dew for three days. The leaves are then packed tightly into pieces of bamboo, which are then hung on a shelf over the fireplace, to dry. This imparts a smoky flavour to the tea and is hence called the 'Dhooan (smoky) Chang (bamboo shelf) Technique'. It can be kept for years in this manner without losing flavour, and this chunk of tea is cut into little pieces as per requirement, when it is brewed. Meeting Mr Rajiv Ningkhee, a noted Singpho writer who is making a documentary on Ningru La, the first tea trader, was a privilege. He has collected factual evidence and will be showcasing it in the documentary to prove that Ningru La produced 35 of the total 95 boxes of tea sent for auction to Mincing Lane, London, in 1838, for which he received £ 480. Ningru La apparently sent these boxes even before the first Assamese planter, Maniram Dewan, had established his garden.

At present, there are only three Singpho families in the Margherita area who produce around 2000 kg of organic tea per year. Earlier they exported this to Canada and a few European countries but lately have stopped doing so as they have been unable to meet the domestic demand. Rajesh Singpho is one such entrepreneur, who has his own tea production unit at his place. He has modernized the traditional style of producing Singpho tea by using simple mini wooden troughs, a mini roller and a mini dryer. However, this form of tea produced does not have the smoky flavour.

The Singphos and Tourism

An ecotourism village nestled in the pristine lap of nature is located just 15 km away from Margherita town and 6 km from our very own Dehing T. E. Singpho Eco-Lodge at Inthong, set up in 2005, is the brainchild of Mr Manjela Singpho. He was enterprising enough to tap the potential of the area for business without compromising on tradition. This unique lodge is constructed totally from bamboo in the traditional 'chang' style. One can try ethnic dishes here, cooked with herbs minus oil and spices – a gourmand's delight! There is provision for staying as well. It is looked after by his wife, who also displays traditional Singpho garments and handicrafts in her tiny shop there.

The Singphos are extremely proud and protective of their cultural heritage, although they are not averse to embracing modern trends.

Cameo

"He is a player who makes the most of his opportunity. There's not really one true outstanding trait that defines him but rather you have to look at the whole package – his versatility, his attitude, his ability" ~ Gord Ash

Sanjay Narayan Chowdhury

~ a profile

~ Shibani Hazarika
Guwahati



A man with a multifaceted personality who is a sportsman, a singer, a musician, a painter, a golfer and, above all, in spite of excelling in so many fields, just a humble person – he is none other than our very own Sanjay Narayan Chowdhury.

Born into the famous Zamindari families of Assam – the Naranarayans and the Chilarai of Goalpara, Assam, Sanjay is a man with a great zest for life... always positive and helpful towards all.

He started his education at Sainik School, Goalpara. The knack for games, music and painting was evident right from his very childhood. He was a good sportsman in school, who excelled as a sprinter. His father, himself an all round sportsman, bought him his first pair of roller skates when he was in Class V and in no time Sanjay stood out as an excellent skater. That was the period when Sanjay started loving and getting attached to wheels, machines and electronic items...a techno savvy person now, I would say!



An ardent lover of music, he was compelled to skip his PT and drill classes in school and join the school band. He played the bugle so well that he was chosen to participate in the

Republic Day Parade at New Delhi in 1983 when Gyani Zail Singh was the President of India. He even got the opportunity of visiting Rashtrapati Bhavan for tea with the President.

One other musical accomplishment in his repertoire is his expertise in playing the guitar.

He tried his hand at painting too and had bagged the second prize in the Inter-Sainik School Painting Competition held in Kerela.

Besides all his varied activities, Sanjay also managed to pursue a good academic career. He was offered a scholarship from the Assam Government to study B.Sc Horticulture in Marathwada University, Maharashtra. After graduating with flying colours in 1992 he started living in Kolkata with his uncle. It was then that he applied for a job with Williamson Magor.

Here I would like to pen down a small but interesting incident which he shared with me. In 1993 when he was a fresher applying for jobs in various tea companies, he had met Mr C.S. Lalkaka and collected a questionnaire to apply for a job in our Company. His uncle with whom he was staying had a lot of dogs. As soon as he came home the dogs grabbed the file from him and tore the questionnaire to bits. He was too scared to go back to Mr Lalkaka and ask for a fresh one so he thought he would let some time pass before he asked for a questionnaire again. He applied for the job a second time and was selected in 1996 to join Jainti T.E. in the Dooars under Mr Saibal Ghose. But for Destiny and the



the drums, Parag Borah on the keyboard and himself as a vocalist too. The band was successful for quite a few years but had to break up because of their transferable jobs.

dogs, he would have joined the Company three years earlier. He still has the torn pieces of the first questionnaire today.

Keenly interested in machines, he used to sharpen CTC rollers in the lathe machine, be with engineers when they dismantled and assembled the DG set to learn its mechanism, and drive the tractor in the field to cut Guatemala grass or plough the land during free hours when he was an Assistant Manager at Dehing T.E.

On club days he used to play soccer and started learning golf at Margherita Club. Being a shy person he was reluctant to play tournaments as he was apt to lose too many balls. The first golf tournament Sanjay played in was when Mr Pushpajit (Dicky) Gill dragged him along. With the passage of time golf became his passion. Today he is an accomplished player who has won many laurels at numerous golf tournaments.

Every evening, after coming back from the factory and also on holidays he took up music and started playing the guitar and singing. He and some fellow planter-

musicians came up with the idea of forming a band which they named The Planters' Band, comprising Manoj Gogoi as lead guitarist, Mukesh Tandon as rhythm guitarist and vocalist, Dr Raj Sharma as bass guitarist, Prasenjit Chakraborty on



A man of style, Sanjay tied the knot while he was at Bukhial T.E. with the equally stylish and gorgeous Nandini on 26 January 2004. Nandini is a professional working for Jet Airways. He left Bukhial for unavoidable reasons but, with his open mind and ever friendly nature, settled down with ease at our Guwahati office with his base at the Inland Container Depot (ICD).

At ICD his work is basically mechanized which made him come back to wheels again – from his roller skates' wheel size which had a 2 inch diameter he has now moved on to the 5 ft diameter wheel of a reach stacker which can lift a 60 ton capacity container! Even at ICD he has not missed the chance of driving all sorts of vehicles from forklifts, trucks to trailers – which speaks volumes about his passion for driving!

At home he does the maintenance work on the air conditioners, washing machine, and all electrical items/circuits. Interestingly, he had dismantled his Yamaha bike and re-assembled it and opened his Samsung Note 2 mobile thrice for repairs! He can solve the Rubik's cube in two minutes and his next target is to solve it within a minute.

A dedicated family man, Sanjay is a loving father and husband. At home, he spends time with his only child, Jayana, playing games and music with her.

Sanjay loves to take up challenges, which has made his life interesting, and believes that overcoming these is what makes one's life meaningful.

It was a pleasure to write about him and we wish him and his family happiness always and success in the pursuit of his many hobbies.

“A bundle of talent” is what describes Sanjay Narayan Chowdhury – in short!





~ Neeru Shekhawat
Mahakali T.E.

In a planter's life, the club takes centre stage. The beehive of all activities, be it sports or social life, clubs are the very hub of life in the tea gardens.



TINGRI CLUB

Tingri Club, situated on 'Keyhung Mati' gets its name from the river Tingri which flows through this estate. It has a membership of sixteen gardens, namely – Dirial, Itakhooli, Keyhung, Mahakali, Hatimara, Deohall, Zaloni, Rajah Alli, Balijan (Hoogrijan), Madhuting, Santi, Bahadur, Hatijan, Jutlibari, Mahadeobari and Madhuban. The members are resident executives of these gardens. Located just 11 km away from Tinsukia town, Tingri Club has five non-planter members too, availing the various facilities provided there.

The club was built some time in 1917 and boasts six tennis courts, a swimming pool, a squash court, an outdoor badminton court, a pool table and a well stocked library. The members can play table tennis, carrom and chess too. However, the main feature of the club is its massive football field lined with tall trees on one side, this open space adding to the grandeur. Tingri Club has always been the favourite ground for most of the cricket and football tournaments. The Upper Assam Inter-Company football



Club Tennis Team – 1960s



and cricket matches are always held here. The John Morice Cricket match between the Company's North and South bank estates is also hosted here every alternate year. The grounds can simultaneously host four 5-a-Side football matches or two cricket matches.

The golf course is situated a little away from the main club building, having its own golf 'hut' where the golfers make merry on club days and Sundays. About four or five decades back the Tingri golf course was open to the Oil executives, being the only course in close proximity to Duliajan. This has since been discontinued as the oil club now has its own golf course.

Besides games, socially too the planters know how to entertain themselves, with



all festivals being celebrated with equal enthusiasm. Be it Holi or Bihu, Diwali or Christmas, no member feels homesick as these festivals are always celebrated

according to the custom and the food and décor befitting the occasion. Be it the beat of the Dhol (drums) during Bihu, Holi by the poolside, 'rangoli' and 'diyas' for Diwali or Santa with his gifts at Christmas, each festival is celebrated with pomp and fervour by all the members of the club.

Along with these festive celebrations, the committee members organize cultural evenings, which have become a club tradition over the years. We have the Men's Nite, where the ladies take charge of the bar and the ladle and spoons are left for the gents to stir pots and pans with, as they churn out delicious dishes for that one evening. Then there is the Mid-Rains Dance, an event usually held towards the



end of July or early August, which helps the members relax and unwind during the peak season of tea production. The Swimming Gala is held when the children are home for their summer vacation, with a lot of fun and games. Tennis and chess coaching camps are also organized at the club during this time. The Club Meet and Flower Show are the major events which all members look forward to and participate in, during the cold weather. Movies and supper are organized every fortnight for the entertainment of all members.



Tingri Club has a unique horseshoe shaped bar with a few saddles converted into bar stool seats. It is the centre of attraction in the hall. It is the only Tea Club which has the fireplace still running on a

gas pipe line. There is an old grand piano which some of the musically inclined members make use of!

The club is but a mere structure and it's the members who make it what it is. Tingri has always been a very warm and welcoming club. All members carry fond memories of their times spent here when they leave this district.

TINGRI CLUB LIFE MEMBERS	
NAME	YEAR
C.G.ALLEN	19 78
T. R.SENGAL	19 84
BAHADUR SINGH	19 93
HIMMAT SINGH	2002
N.K.BARUAH	2003
P.K.KAUL	2013



MOZMIN AHMED



Mozmin, wife of Razibuddin Ahmed of the Advisory establishment at Margherita T.E., was awarded her PhD for her thesis on 'Performance Study of an Ad Hoc Network under Malicious Node Attack' from the North East Regional Institute of Science & Technology (NERIST), Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh. She received her degree on 19 April 2015

from Air Marshal (Retd) P.K. Borbora in the presence of His Excellency the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh. After getting her B.Tech degree in Computer Science & Engineering, Mozmin went on to complete her M. Tech in Information Technology at NERIST. She has attended International Workshops and has a vast number of paper publications on her area of expertise, to her credit. Recently, one of her papers has been accepted for a conference in Malaysia.

She is presently doing research on 'The Effect of Malicious Nodes on the Latence, Packet Drop & Throughput in an Ad Hoc Network'. We wish her all success in her academic career.



NEHARIKA GURUNG



Neharika, daughter of Saneer Gurung (HO Kolkata) and Dimple, was one of the three-member team from Shrishti School of Art, Design & Technology, Bengaluru, who created a film called 'Shifting Tides' which won the award for Best Film

in the Non-Fiction category at the Students' Film Festival of India held at the Film & Television Institute of India (FTII) Pune from 24 to 28 February 2015.

The National Students' Film Awards were instituted in 2012 by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, to promote emerging film-making talents in film schools around the country and provide them with a platform that would help them realize their artistic vision. Students from film and design institutes across the country submit their films to

be evaluated by eminent personalities and then be nominated for a range of awards.

'Shifting Tides' was filmed in Kutch, a semi-arid region in Gujarat. The film is about the Jat Community and Kharai Camels. This unique camel species is one of its kind because they swim in marine waters in search of mangroves – their primary diet. The main objective behind filming this particular breed, and this particular nomadic tribal community, was to bring to light the issues that these people face, and to raise awareness about the Kharai Camels – a breed that is not a registered species and thus in grave danger of becoming extinct.

Neharika was responsible for the sound effects. We applaud her and the team for focusing on a worthy cause, congratulate her on her success and wish her a bright future.

MIJICAJAN IN THE FIFTIES



~ David Air
Florida, USA

Mijicajan in the fifties was a garden where

some 'plusses' happened and a few 'non plusses'. The out garden, Kolapani, had an airstrip which was the start of the Skyplayers service to bring food etc from Calcutta for the hungry of the North Bank. The air service also took freight to Calcutta, such as early teas in May.

The Manager was Fred Rogers, the Garden Assistant was Gunin Khound and I was the Mistri Sahib. John Batten had been the Mistri Sahib but was sent to Africa for a couple of months, and John asked me if I would look after his elephant. It was a lovely animal and I readily agreed. My main instruction from John was to make sure its feet were in good order with no stones or something similar caught between its toes. In order to make sure I was carrying out John's wishes, I arranged for the elephant to come to the office every morning, lie down and present its feet for me to inspect. He would appear with his mahout and lie down. I then inspected his feet, one by one, and after I had finished the inspection I had to move out of the way quickly as he needed a lot of space to stand up again.

Later, he developed a boil on his cheek which became quite large. The vet was summoned. He made a thorough inspection of the boil and gave me one of these old fashioned jars which had probably had candies in it but now had white pills about the size of an old half crown (3 mm in diameter). I was instructed to give him 20 pills per day. We then sat on the verandah and enjoyed a cup of tea with the vet. He left after the tea break, and it was just as he was driving out the gate that I suddenly remembered I had failed to ask him how one gives an elephant a pill.

I gave him a couple of pills by hand, which he immediately spat out. The next move (my wife Christine's idea) was to place a couple of pills in a papaya and offer it to him. He was too wise; he picked up the papaya and realized the pills were in it. He dropped it, stood on it lightly and blew the pills out, then ate the papaya.



I then had to take over this strange task by cajoling him to open his mouth and I threw the pills into his throat as strongly as I could. I was also constantly speaking to him as he covered me with his saliva. Eventually I won, and thereafter he took the pills on a daily basis. The boil did reduce in size to about a third but never did go away.

I could sit on his back and move around, and if there was a branch which would hit my head as we moved forward he would raise his trunk and break off the offending branch.

John did not return to Assam for 18 months so I enjoyed the elephant for all that time. A wonderful animal and I was sorry to lose him when John returned.

At that time the factory did not have CTC manufacture so the rollers were busy but well maintained with the remainder of the process running efficiently. The oil fired heaters were sometimes a problem and sadly we had a back fired explosion in one of the dryers which severely injured the operator. The man who was the clever engineer was by name Hope Mistri, a Khasi from Shillong. A great man to work with, he had the cleverness to be able to fix most problems.

In the cold weather when most maintenance was carried out, one of the tasks I set off completing was to check the construction of all the factory including the roof. I should mention here that Hope Mistri was probably only three quarters the weight of yours truly.

We climbed up, inspecting as we moved to the roof apex where the roof sheets were definitely not capable of keeping the weather out in the summer. Whilst telling Hope to be very careful where he walked, I myself stood on a roof sheet which gave way, and dropped to the ground. I was very lucky as I fell between two rolling machines.

I was taken to Tezpur Hospital in the back of Fred Rogers' car with my wife, Christine, travelling with me. I was treated and x-rayed but amazingly no bones were broken though my muscles had been adversely affected. When I got home, I had to lie on a board for six weeks with no mattress – but I survived!

Requiem

DEVADITYA NATH



1984 - 2014

*“The life of the departed is placed in the
memory of the living...”*

*The departed are not gone...they live in us for
as long as we remember them.”*

poStScript

Summer Melodies



Summer in the gardens has its own charm, if one doesn't dwell too much on the sweltering heat! It is a time when Nature shows off her lovely greenery by way of lush tea bushes, an emerald

canopy of trees, with that carpet of grass one sinks into while walking around. As far as the eye can see there is soothing greenery, often interspersed by colourful dots, as the brightly clad pluckers go about tipping the 'two and a bud'. The hot sunshine, punctuated by cooling showers, leaves behind a sparkling clean world and almost overnight the streams chuckle gleefully as they fill to the brim. Small children with homemade tackles catch little fish, or scramble around hooking tiny crabs for a delicious meal, carefully wrapping them in 'kochu pattas' (wild yam leaves) as they wend their way homewards. One often sees them sailing tiny, colourful paper boats amidst noisy chattering and laughter – the simple pleasures bringing them so much joy.

One could come upon a small snake while taking a walk in the garden... equally startling for both parties, of course, but a pleasure to watch the marvellous colours they sport as they smoothly glide away. It is a different matter should a larger variety of this species make an appearance, in which case it's

better to beat a safe retreat! I've often felt I've left my shadow behind, so fast have I vanished from the spot, during such encounters!!! Then, there are multitudes of colourful birds, singing their own songs, which is such a treat. Startled clouds of brilliantly coloured butterflies rise in the air as one comes upon them unawares. Yes, each new day Nature unfolds beautiful experiences.

During this season the fragrance of tea leaves being processed in the factory is simply heavenly. Many a Tea lady has wondered why such a perfume hasn't been bottled yet! When this scent wafts in to the bungalow on sultry nights, one cannot but stop whatever one is doing, to simply inhale it.

These are the summer melodies which stir our souls, filling us with peace, for then we realise that, "Happiness flutters in the air whilst we rest among the breaths of Nature."

Rupa Saikia



THE WM TIMES TEAM

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Assistant Editor : Rupa Saikia
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“A fallen blossom returning to the bough, thought I
But no, a butterfly!”
~ *Arakida Moritake*



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Believe in tea

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