



**MY EXPERIENCES IN
TEA & RUBBER PLANTATION
MANAGEMENT
IN
CEYLON
1952 - 1969**

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Cover photo "Somerset Tea Factory" by Dominic Sansoni

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Foreword

I attempt to write this account as it happened and from my point of view at the time, making minimal commentary from my current point of view at the age of seventy. I hope I have remembered the failures and lapses as well as the successes.

When I was in High School I remember saying to myself or to a friend, 'I will never be a rickshaw-puller. This was in the context of my lack of interest in most of the subjects in the academic curriculum and my awareness that, academically, I did not expect particularly good results. As a child I used to come within the top three in class, but as more application became necessary I moved to progressively lower positions until, in my late teens, I was tucked away somewhere at the bottom. This was because I only got high marks in the subjects in which I was interested, such as English Language, to some extent English Literature, and in Biology where I excelled. In Physics and Chemistry I was top of the class in "practicals" but right at the bottom in "theory" - the latter was of little or no interest to me. At no stage in the future was I adversely affected by this absence of academic stardom.

My entry into planting was completely fortuitous. My brother was selected by connections of The Ceylon Tea Plantations Pty. Ltd., a London Company but, as he had been selected as an officer in the Ceylon Navy and was shortly due to leave for Dartmouth for officer training, reference was made to the Careers Master at our College, and he recommended me. I went up to the General Manager's¹ residence and office on Scrubs plantation, Nuwara Eliya and was interviewed, the General Manager being on furlough, by the Acting General Manager, who was later to be my PD on my first stint on Tangakelle plantation.

For the sake of convenience, and sometimes tact, in this document I will not refer to most people by name but by their titles in abbreviation as follows:

Manager/Superintendent = PD for Peria Dorai (Big Master) {Executive Staff}

Asst. Manager/Superintendent = SD for Sinna Dorai (Small Master) {Executive Staff}

Visiting Agent/Agricultural Adviser = VA²

George Steuart & Co. = GS

Factory Manager/Rubbermaker = RM*

Factory Manager/Teamaker = TM*

Head Clerk/(Office Manager) = HC*

Conductor/Field Officer (Non-executive plantation/division manager)*

Kanakapillai (Overseer/Foreman) = KP*

Kangany (Leading Hand) = None

* Clerical/Supervisory Staff.

¹ His official title was Manager but I have used the term General Manager as some plantation PDs are known as Manager.

² A Visiting Agent was literally that; an agent of the owner who visited once or twice a year to oversee the management of all aspects of the property and advise on policy in general and agricultural practice in particular. Prior to 1950, and in some cases for a time since then, VAs generally had a reputation of being autocratic, tactless and much to be feared. In the CTP, the General Manager, stationed in Nuwara Eliya, was the VA until the time when GS was given the job of general management. From this time, various experienced planters were given the job of VA and the term VA started to be superseded by the term Agricultural Adviser although general management was still included in his duties. Those enlightened individuals amongst these modern VAs were, it seems, less inclined to be dogmatic and more inclined to take into account the resident PD's views. My experience with VAs ranged from good to excellent as will be seen later.

THE COMPANY

Incorporated in London, The Ceylon Tea Plantations Co. Pty., Ltd. and its sister company, The Ceylon Proprietary Tea Estates Co. Pty., Ltd. were for all practical, non-accounting purposes run as one, and were known collectively as The CTP. In 1952 the CTP owned some thirty-two plantations in Ceylon. Of these two were rubber, two coconut, one cocoa and the rest, twenty-seven, tea. Over the next seventeen years, the cocoa plantation, Mariawatte, was sold and Scrubs amalgamated with Somerset.

The Company was generally highly respected in planting circles and had a reputation as a company that treated its staff and labour well. It was one of the few overseas companies that gave its native executives the same furlough benefits as it gave its ex-patriot ones. It was said that it was the then Chairman's view that furlough given to the former would "broaden their view" and benefit the Company thereby. In his book published in 2003 a one time Director, and later Chairman, of George Steuart & Co. referred to the CTP as a "Company with Rolls Royce standards" though it is not clear whether this reference was to agricultural standards or employment standards or both. When I joined the Company, furlough was for six months every five years for those on the low country plantations, and for six months every six years for those on the up-country plantations. Later this was changed to six months every five years irrespective of where one was, and then four months every four years, and perhaps, two months every two years for those having children at school overseas.

Each year we were also entitled to twenty-one days local leave and, in addition, PDs could leave the plantation overnight provided only that they advised GS of their intentions. In practice, in my time as a PD, this leave was unlimited and 'overnight' could include a day on either side. I am not aware whether records of such leave were kept because the subject of how much leave I had taken was never raised. I suspect that the main criterion for most such things in the case of PDs was that the plantation was properly managed. If these leave terms appear generous they should be viewed in the context that the job was one virtually entailing being on call twenty-four hours a day.

Also, at the time I joined, we supplied our own furniture and furnishings. Some six years later, the Company bought these from us and thereafter provided them itself. Cars and drivers were provided for PDs in the Company, and later Land Rovers as well for the bigger plantations or, more correctly perhaps, for the bigger plantations that warranted one. SDs were provided with motorcycles from about the mid to late fifties. All these could be used for private purposes at no charge. The primary purpose of the provision of a driver was so that the PD could drive around the plantation observing the fields, or so that he could be dropped off at one point, walk, and be picked up elsewhere.

In 1953 the CTP declared an annual bonus of four months salary, the Company's bonuses being paid to all monthly paid staff. This covered all from PDs to lorry drivers. In subsequent years the bonus went to three months salary, then to two for a couple of years and ceased not long after. After the declaration of the 1953 bonus, I wrote to the General Manager thanking him for his letter advising that a bonus of four months had been declared. The immediate response, via my PD, was to enquire whether I did not appreciate the bonus; and there may have been the suggestion that I return it. This unofficial exercise was to impress on me that in the CTP there were certain ways of wording letters. I was a quick learner!

Where the executive staff were concerned there was an unwritten law, a tradition, regarding standards of social conduct and dress - one that was proudly upheld by us. The Company also decreed that its executives travelled exclusively first class to and from furlough. This was when this travel was by ship. When sea travel was replaced by air travel this did not apply. During the time that it was compulsory for us to go to London on furlough it was a requirement that, as soon as possible after arriving, we report to the London office. Here we met one or more of the Directors as well as the staff. The staff, in particular the Secretary, were very nice people and seemed genuinely happy to make our acquaintance.

In my time there is the story of one PD who, with his family, went out by ship in 'tourist class' as it was then known, and pocketed the difference. On arrival in England, he was apparently given twenty-four hours to refund the difference or be sacked! On the other hand, when I was on my first furlough, then six months, in 1956/57, the first Suez crisis delayed my return by a month and I was a bit concerned about money as we were not paid in England but brought with us funds ex-Ceylon for six months. The Company was not aware of my concern but I was asked to come in and see them and the Secretary told me that they

did not want me worrying about money and that they would pay me extra "and charge it to office expenses or some such thing in London." This was because it was against Ceylon Government regulations to pay me in England.

At some time in or around 1890 a young man named Masfield came out to Ceylon as a planter either in the CTP or another company. At the age of twenty-four he became the CTP General Manager. From that time or later the General Manager was resident on Scrubs in Nuwara Eliya in an imposing residence incorporating the Ceylon Head Office. In 1951, and presumably before that, the PD of Scrubs, a mere 190 acres of tea plus a small factory, was also the Head Office manager. The General Manager's car, in keeping with the Company's standards, was a Daimler - no less!

After the war (WW II) it was said that the CTP plantations were in much better condition than others and this was attributed to Masfield's policy of green manuring during the period when fertilizer was unavailable.

The Company supplied each PD, daily from London, an airmail copy of The Daily Telegraph. This was shared with the SD if there was one. Regrettably, the practice was discontinued in about 1963 when a visiting Director discovered, in a few PD's bungalows, stacks of unopened copies.

From the beginning of 1960 the Company handed over the management of its plantations to the Colombo based George Steuart & Co., as agents and secretaries to the Board in London (hereafter referred to as the Board). Simultaneously, the position of Ceylon General Manager was scrapped and the Visiting Agent duties, to that time done by the General Manager, were allocated to various senior PDs outside the Company. We understood at the time that there were certain unusual stipulations attached to the arrangement with GS; one was that the Company's affairs be managed by a Director of GS, and the other that, should a CTP PD wish it, his correspondence in reference to any matter would be passed on to the Board. Although I never made such a request, it did seem to me that, from the wording of replies I received at times, correspondence regarding important matters raised by me were copied to the Board in part or in full. I felt that this arrangement greatly aided CTP PDs in their dealings with GS.

In the late fifties or early sixties, the Company added to the 'perks' of its executives in Ceylon by paying the annual membership fee of one club of choice per PD and SD; and after GS took over, the Company paid us Rs 100 per visit to Colombo as expenses. No bills were required, and most of us stayed with friends or relatives.

In the early sixties the PD on Dewalakande met with an accident in his Land Rover, driven by the driver, and severely injured his knees. As a result of this, the CTP directed that all Company PD's vehicles were to be fitted with seat belts for the front passenger - usually the PD.

GLENLYON

(598 acres including Stair Div.)

Category - High Grown

1952/53

In July 1952, at the age of nearly 18^{1/2} years, I went up to Glenlyon in Agarapatna to start my six months of "creeping", a term said to have originated from the tongue-in-cheek perception that during this period the new inductee would be, figuratively, made to creep under the bushes to learn the basics of planting. At this stage, this did not include manufacture or administration for me.

My training was to be in the hands of the PD of Glenlyon, comprising the divisions³ of Glenlyon and Stair, with my training being on Glenlyon division.

To learn the day to day minutiae of running a plantation I was put in the very capable hands of Thevarayan, the Head Kangany, who was in charge of Glenlyon division, and was very knowledgeable not only in respect of the field but also in respect of labour management. From the PD and Thevarayan, as well as all the very helpful lesser lights, many with much light to shed on a multitude of subjects each according to his own expertise, I gained an exceptional foundation of knowledge. I also learned a lot from the PD through his knowledge and the experiences he related to me, as well as a lot about the CTP, its standards and its values.



Glenlyon Managers' bungalow with office below - c.1952.

³ Each Division was comprised of a number of blocks of tea bushes (c.20-50 acres) called fields.



Glenlyon factory (front) - 1952.



Glenlyon factory (rear) - 1952.



Ian with Sathasivam K.P.



Knapsack spraying with copper oxide for blister blight. 1952.



Glenlyon, 1952. Sathasivam K.P. weighing leaf in the field.



After an overnight pig shoot in the jungle above Glenlyon with my trophy. L > R: Back row - Self, Gamini Salgado, Dr. Frank Fernando D.M.O. Agrapatana & Front row - Mendis, Kathan and ?

Personnel management as a science was not part of training at any stage. It was not a recognised science at the time of training or later. It was simply a matter of hit or miss depending on the aptitude and talent of each PD or SD.

From the first day I was in my element and in my enthusiasm even set up a small experiment to do with "banjies". Banji is the English derivation of the Tamil word 'vungi', the term given to the periodically appearing dormant terminal bud of a tea shoot. This dormancy, if widespread on a bush, results in a reduction in yield and, consequently, had to be picked off by the pluckers on each plucking round so as to stimulate new growth. It was then, as later, a constant battle to get pluckers to do this properly.

I was interested to know the period of dormancy of a banji and, to ascertain this, tied different coloured threads to various banjis on a bush near the office so as to monitor what occurred.

One gathered that it was usual for creepers to make gaffes and/or embarrass themselves in some way and I was no exception. It was perfectly understandable that one would make mistakes when learning a new language, Tamil in this case, on the run. One was just thrown in at the deep end, as communication with the workforce was not possible except in Tamil. Of course, the senior field staff and salaried staff spoke English.

Mistakes were sympathetically and respectfully accepted by all, but there were occasions when my mistakes were humorous or hilarious and caused respectfully stifled mirth.

As part of my field wear I had brought a pair of riding breeches that came in handy because tea bushes could be wet and the wetness cold. They also protected against scratches from tea branches. One day I was inspecting the work of some tea pluckers and came to the top of the embankment of a road. The embankment was about six feet high and the simplest way around this obstacle was to jump down - a feat well within the capacity of this fit "ex swimming champion". I jumped down, and as I landed, flexed my knees to lessen the impact. This was very effective but much to my consternation I heard the sound of the rending of cloth. I instantly suspected the obvious calamity and realised that extreme discretion was called for as most of the pluckers, all women⁴, were on or near the lower side of the road resuming their positions prior to moving down the hill. I kept close to the bank, with my back towards it and surreptitiously sought the cause of the rending sound I had heard. My palm and fingers revealed a tear of about ten inches down the seam of the seat of my breeches. The tight fit of the breeches below my knees and at the rear had prevented any 'give'! Fortunately, I had underpants on. *So now what to do?* There was only one solution and that was to depart gracefully and without disgrace so, keeping my rear as close as possible to, and facing, the bank, I moved away from the plucking 'gang' giving instructions as I went. As soon as I was clear, I dived into the tea field and headed towards home taking great care to avoid every living soul.

Approaching the bungalow another panic hit me. *What if the servants see me?* Quite irrational behaviour no doubt, but there it was - a combination of youth and a totally new environment. Then, instead of doing the sensible thing and going through the front door where one is least likely to come across a servant, I went through the kitchen and was sprung! Also, needless to say, the most sensible thing would have been to brazen it out and say *See what happened!* - and laugh it off if anyone spotted the damage.

Most gaffes or embarrassing incidents I took in my stride but there was one other that did cause me more than just a little embarrassment. I was weighing up the leaf of the lined up pluckers who had to give me their little paper chits on which I had to enter the weight of that weighing when one plucker, and later another, and another, would not give me their chit. I started berating them until it was quietly explained to me by a staff member that these were women who were having their periods and that it was not etiquette for them to hand anything to me. A lesson in human relations learned.

Clerical work to be learned was stocktaking and entering and reconciling the checkroll. This latter consisted of a book containing the names of all the workers and non-salaried staff, and in this book one had to enter at the end of each day, what work if any was done by each person. Another book contained a list of all types of work done on a plantation during a calendar year and one had to enter, by a head count or other means, the number of workers who did each type of work for that day. At the end of the day, the total number of workers marked in the checkroll as having worked on the day would have to be the same as the total number of workers entered by type of work. For example, if the division had a workforce of 300, and 200 worked on the day with 100 of them plucking tea, 50 weeding, 25 lopping shade trees and 25 spraying (total 200) the two books were reconciled. This example is oversimplified as, in reality, there were about 150 possible work types that could be worked on any given day.

⁴ Plucking was usually done by women, but when the tea was flushing heavily men were co-opted.

If the two books did not reconcile, the process of finding the error/s could be long and tedious and, no matter how long it took, the reconciled books had to be in the PD's office at 7.30 am the next morning - and no excuses! There were occasions, both on Glenlyon and elsewhere when I would be up till 1 or 2 am working from, say, 6 p.m., searching for the mistake or mistakes.

The daily routine on a plantation started with "muster" which was held at 7 am each working day prior to the commencement of work at 7.30 am and it was a requirement that the SD/Creeper attend it⁵. The workers for the day gathered at the muster ground and were allocated various jobs singly or in groups known as gangs. From an organizational point of view muster was pivotal to the proper functioning of the plantation. Each morning after muster, what was called the Muster Chit was completed and sent to the PD. The Muster Chit was a printed list of all the main work types and each detailed the worker distribution by work type, for the day.

Another book which went to the PD each morning was the Diary. This was a foolscap size book which was ruled up and completed daily by the SD, or Creeper, or the staff member responsible for the Division, and contained a tabulation of all the fields showing the number of days since each was last plucked and, therefore, when it was next due, the number of pluckers on the day, the acres plucked, the pluckers used per acre and the crop harvested for the day, all by the field.

It was important that fields were plucked on time, usually on a frequency of 7 - 10 days depending on season and the time since the field was last pruned, as over-mature leaf stems contained hard fibres that were detrimental to the quality of the final product. The Diary also tabulated important work such as weeding, draining, lopping, manuring and pruning, detailing the number of workers, the acreage completed and the workers/acre for the day, previously and to date. From this the PD could monitor costs against estimated (budgeted) costs. The Diary was also one means of daily communication between the PD and his divisional heads. At times, depending on the PD, this communication could range from complementary to critical, and from gentle to violent and sometimes rude!

The usual end of the day event was evening muster where the workers gathered to submit their names for entry in the checkroll and the pluckers brought in their leaf to be weighed and entered against their names. In the interim it was the SD's job, and therefore that of the Creeper, to specifically check work in progress, or recently completed, as well as implement (in the case of the Creeper, to learn and implement) the fundamental principle of P.O.C. = Planning, Organization and Control under the direction of the PD and others. The weighing of the leaf picked by pluckers was done three times a day - mid morning, noon and at the end of the day.

Good powers of observation were a distinct advantage in plantation management because during "management by walking around"⁶ one scanned, or should scan, the fields close and far for any sign of the unusual or the imperfect, or any movement which could indicate legitimate or illegitimate activity, and at a distance, a subtle variation in colour of the 'teascape' could necessitate investigation.

As an indication of the complexity of "management by walking around" on a plantation one can point to the fact that, in old plantings there were about 3500⁷ bushes to the acre and just on the surface of each bush were up to, say, 50 potential problem points - that equates to 175,000 such points per one acre, and that for plucking only!

Although the management of a plantation was complex, when the complexities became second nature there was no burden at all.

At this time the Company was in the process of opening up more sections of the plantations to road transport. This entailed the positioning and cutting of new roads, or the extension of existing ones, all cut by hand. There was one such in progress on Glenlyon so I was able to learn about this aspect of work. I put my hand to plucking but soon discovered that to do it well was an art, an art at which some excelled, and which required a lot of practice; for that I had neither the time nor the need. With pruning, however, I made it a point to learn the art of handling the knife as well as doing the job properly at a reasonable speed. Since then, during the pruning season on the plantations I was on, I made it a point to prune a few bushes each time I

⁵ For reasons I cannot recall I did not have to attend morning muster as a Creeper but the details were discussed by me and Thevarayan the evening before.

⁶ From the book *In Search of Excellence* c.1985.

⁷ In replantings post c.1950 there were about 5500 bushes per acre.

visited a pruning gang to keep in touch so that, should the occasion arise⁸, I would be able to demonstrate the ability to do the job as well, if not as speedily, as an accomplished pruner and then say, 'If I can do this number of bushes in half an hour you can do x number for a day'. I never had to do this, as the threat was sufficient, particularly because they knew I **would** do it if the need arose.

The pruning knife had a wooden handle one and a half to two fists long with either a parrot-beak like blade or a straight blade with a hooked end. The blades were six to nine inches long and honed to extreme sharpness. To test its sharpness when honing his knife a pruner would apply it to a small patch on his arm to see if it shaved it easily.

The pruners were the self-affirmed 'elite' of the workers and many of them were "young bucks" and, consequently, prone to volatility. The self-affirmed elitism, together with the volatility, made the pruning gangs one of the major points of potential dispute. The pruning field was also, potentially, the most dangerous because each worker was in possession of a deadly weapon. However, I never had cause for fear nor had anyone I knew, although there were stories of extremely dangerous situations encountered elsewhere.

One way of easing workers' drudgery and maintaining satisfactory work output was the practice of setting 'tasks'. Instead of working eight hours, a particular amount of work (workers per acre per day) was set or agreed upon, taking into account various relevant factors applying to the specific work, and this was called a task. Working at their own speed, the workers completed the task and went home. At times, the setting of a task became a contentious issue which, if unresolved, resulted in a strike. When I was on Glenlyon there was such a dispute on Scrubs where a pruning task of 225 had been set and was in dispute. The Scrubs PD sought the help of my PD and it was arranged that two of the best Glenlyon pruners would go to Scrubs one day and demonstrate what task was achievable. They were given the bus fair (and, no doubt, money for food) but they walked cross-country from Agradatana to Nuwara Eliya, a great distance, arrived by 7.30 am, completed 350 bushes each by 2 p.m. and left for home. That was the end of the dispute.

The tea bushes in all tea fields were planted in rows, originally with the rows running up and down the hills and later, with the advent of replanting old fields, on the contour. To avoid confusion and to facilitate supervision, each worker took a row and when this was finished took another whilst each worker maintained his or her position in the gang. Thus, it was possible to determine who did what where for a short time after it was done or, in the case of tasks, to determine whether an individual had finished their task.

Tea pluckers in the later stages of pregnancy were allocated safe areas in which to work and all women workers were entitled to twelve weeks maternity leave⁹ on full pay at the standard rate. Nursing mothers were allowed time off three times a day to feed their babies

In the CTP one thing given a lot of emphasis was the preparation of the plantation for a visit of the General Manager (and in later years the VA), the Chairman or a London Director. The PD went round the plantation with the SD (if he had one) and a small gang of workers, looking for anything that was wrong or out of place and it was put right. Potholes in roads were filled in and bumps levelled, visible weeds uprooted, roadside compost heaps were tidied into perfect rectangles and so on ad infinitum. Also, guard stones and culverts were whitewashed, bridges and signs painted and the plantation tidied to give a good impression. We did this once on Glenlyon.

It was when I was creeping that I first came across the publications of the Tea Research Institute of Ceylon, the leading such institute in the world. These were of great interest to me and I read them avidly then and thereafter although, as in college, my interest was more in the practical than the theory.

The art of labour management was largely a matter of learning by observation combined with one's innate skill. Involving as it did hundreds of workers a well-balanced mixture of charisma, tact, confidence, presence, firmness and caring most often engendered respect.

As a result of my belief in duty and responsibility, I was a taskmaster. I insisted on a fair day's work for a fair day's pay and was insistent on a high standard of work and none of those training me suggested that I was over-zealous in this regard. On the other hand, most of the workers and kanganies tried to do as little work as possible, something common on all plantations.

Plantation workers were paid in cash by the tenth of each month basically according to the number of days each had worked in the preceding month, and this amounted to a considerable amount of money. The

⁸ "Go slows" were relatively frequent on plantations.

⁹ Three weeks before the birth and nine weeks after.

cash was delivered by a contractor, in bulk by the denomination, then set out on a desk from which it was counted and handed to each worker, or their representative, as their name was called out. It was quite a feat to accomplish this task quickly and efficiently as hundreds of workers were involved, all milling around if allowed to, with the pay for each having to be counted and handed over and some having queries or pointing out an error in the counting. Because their names were called out in the order in which they appeared in the checkroll they knew when their names would come up. I was pleased when I achieved a paying rate of Rs 300 per minute - I think the biggest denomination of note was Rs 50 and the average wage for adults about Rs 65. A KP counted the coins which he then handed to me to put with the notes I had counted, and hand to each worker.

Adjoining Glenlyon was state jungle from which wild boar used to come on to the plantation and root around in the tea, on occasion attacking a worker. Also, though infrequently, a leopard would be noticed in the tea during the day and cause much alarm. My PD and I, together with two workers, Mendis and Karthan, often went out at night hunting the wild boar which were very dangerous, particularly if hurt. We once had a shooting platform built in the jungle over a pig trail but they never used the trail after that. At times, it was very cold out at night, especially when sitting on the small platform with three others and no room to move. The gun barrel could get so cold that it stuck to one's fingers. These nights out often resulted in no sleep, but there was no holiday the next day.

SOMERSET (CARLABECK) 858 acres

(Somerset 244 ac., Carlabeck 246½ ac., Easdale 160 ac., Scrubs 190 ac.)

Category - High Grown

1953

A division of Somerset, Carlabeck was situated on a road called the Radella Shortcut because, if taken, it reduced the travelling time via the main road by about fifteen minutes. One section of it, about one kilometre, was very steep, with an incline of 1:10 or more and the entrance to the Carlabeck bungalow was about 250m from the bottom of this steep section. Hence, motoring up the hill from this point was all in first gear, and since my car was brand new and being run-in, the cylinders developed an oval shape. The road was called the Radella Shortcut because the turn-off to the Radella Club and Radella plantation was at the bottom of it, and it bisected both Carlabeck and Easdale.



Somerset factory from the Carlabeck bungalow - c.1953.

Somerset's other divisions were Somerset itself, Easdale and Scrubs totalling 750-850 acres approx. Easdale and Carlabeck were adjacent to each other a few miles from Somerset division, and Scrubs was seven or eight miles away in Nuwara Eliya a couple of thousand feet higher. The factory was on Carlabeck but was not the responsibility of the SD.

Carlabeck had recently been bought by the CTP, primarily for its factory as the Somerset factory had burned down. Prior to that, it was owned and managed by an ageing Englishman. This background was significant relative to me and the workforce when I came to this my first posting. The significant factors were firstly, there would have been a long term and relatively intimate relationship between the recent owner and his workforce; a long time of unchanging, established practice, and there may have been a certain laxity

in discipline as a result of this and the age of the owner. With the new ownership came change and, with the arrival of an SD on site, close scrutiny of work and, perhaps, more discipline imposed. Such changes could be expected to be unsettling for a workforce. Secondly, I was the first SD on Carlabeck and, thirdly, I was not European. Where the last mentioned is concerned the "white master", purely because he was a different colour to the workers, a colour associated in workers' minds with connotations of their own inferiority, was more readily accepted as boss than a native. The new phenomenon, the native SD or PD, had a little more of a challenge to command respect, especially when this was a new experience for the workers; the whole business of labour management required just that little bit more effort and finesse.

The Carlabeck workforce was about 384, based on the then accepted norm of 1.25 workers per acre.

My responsibilities covered both Carlabeck and Easdale; the latter was about 160 acres but my focus here is on Carlabeck because work involving Easdale was uneventful. My salary was Rs 750 per month. The CTP was known for paying very well so this was an excellent salary. During my time on Carlabeck, the Chairman, Mr. Masfield, visited, and during his visit told me something like, 'We weren't paid as much as you chaps are paid.' And my reply was, 'That may be so, Sir, but how much was whiskey?' to which he replied, 'Oh, whiskey was Rs 5 a case, and the servants were paid with some sugar and rice.' He omitted to point out that the Company now paid the servants.

My PD arrived at the Carlabeck bungalow to welcome and install me, and very thoughtfully brought with him a few basic supplies, one being Kellogg's Cornflakes, with which to start my larder. He was a very nice man, forthright and "gung ho", an ex British Army Major and quite a character. Much to my amusement I once saw him in his car driving round and round the factory at great speed, and when I asked him what was going on he said he was looking for the TM but that each time he thought that the TM was at the front door he had gone to the back door! Having been in the Middle East during the war (WW II) where he, typically, won an MC, he liked to use a few Arabic words and he also called those he liked "Badava" (Bastard). During the war he lost a leg below the knee and wore an artificial leg.



Carlabeck bungalow (left side) - c.1953.

The Carlabeck bungalow had an impact on me for two reasons: Firstly, because it symbolised, physically, my arrival as a planter, and secondly, because it was so old for its type of construction that it was

dilapidated. At first sight, it did not appear to be dilapidated although it was certainly not well presented, a fact unimportant to me in the light of it being my first plantation home. It had electricity from the factory at the bottom of the hill, but there were times when I had to resort to candles, sometimes into the small hours of the morning attempting to reconcile the checkroll. It may have been that the wiring was faulty or that the factory engine was not in use. It was not until the late fifties that most plantations were connected to the electricity grid, something not in existence on a large scale in the country in 1953.

The walls and ceilings were whitewashed at a time when modern wall finishes were just coming into use, and some of the whitewash was coming away from the ceilings. There was also a resident population of six-inch long, black millipedes which often walked upside-down on the ceilings dislodging flakes of whitewash which ended up all over the place, including on the dining table and, possibly, in the food. There was also a large resident population of rats. These lived in the walls, which were thick and made of pieces of rock held in place with mud, in which they obviously had galleries as they could be heard scurrying around out of sight.



Carlabeck bungalow (right side) - c.1953.

At one time I decided that it was time to eliminate the rats and set out rat poison which appeared to do the job. However, I soon began to get the smell of rotting flesh around the house but could not locate the source. As days went by the smell got progressively worse and seemed to be coming from the walls, in different places and at different heights. It was then that I realised, to my disgust, that the poison had a delayed reaction and that the rats had run home to die. There was no alternative to putting up with the stench until, like the rats, it too died.

Some time after I left Carlabeck this bungalow was demolished and a new one built on the same site. Until this was done there was no SD on this division.

When one first takes charge of a plantation or a division one is tested by the workforce. Usually, they have forward information about the new arrival from the amazingly efficient workers' 'grapevine'. For the first few months they try all sorts of things to see how much they can get away with. The period depends on the calibre of the protagonists and it can be quite an interesting 'battle'. On Carlabeck this **was** quite a challenge for the reasons stated earlier, but the strength and backing of my PD was very helpful.

I cannot remember whether there was a Union, but there certainly was a nucleus of men bent on resisting anything they perceived to be in need of resistance. This resistance they applied through the workforce in general. Some of these men were of strong character and were certainly intimidating, but to show fear was not helpful. Similarly, it did not pay to be vindictive.

It is necessary to point out that the SD, most often, and the PD, sometimes, went round the fields alone, and was therefore susceptible to attack by disgruntled workers. Attacks on PDs, from severe to simple, were uncommon though not unknown as were attacks on minor staff.

For some months, resentment towards me from the coterie of malcontents was palpable, and not at all comfortable! I was not doing anything commonly unusual in respect of discipline and quality of work but it was unusual for them. Apart from that, it was quite likely that they enjoyed power in the past that they now felt they would lose. This was a power war and, if peace was to reign in the future, it was necessary that I commanded respect and discipline from the start.

Up to that time the starting and stopping times of work were signalled to the workers by a drum beaten by a worker and audible all over the division. However, on one occasion there was a significant incident involving a number of workers, details of which I cannot remember, whose excuse was that they had not heard the drum. This excuse was obviously incredible and we did not accept it, but the PD's response was swift, excellent and conclusive. Within a day he procured and installed, high above the factory roof, a whistle operated by high-pressure air from the factory engine room and cancelled, forthwith, the duties of the drum beater¹⁰!

One day one of the supervisory staff told me that there were plans afoot to waylay me in the field and assault me. I told him to pass the word around that I was a marshal-arts expert and that, if I was attacked, I would put five of them in hospital before they killed me. I was not a marshal-arts expert but no attempt was made on me. However, my pet monkey was killed at this time or some time later.

On another occasion I was in the bungalow when my servant told me that an angry mob was coming down my bungalow drive. I picked up my walking stick and marched out straight to them, outwardly fearless and inwardly somewhat fearful, and told them to clear off. I cannot remember whether this was all I said or whether I said that I refused to speak to a mob but would speak to a representative, or representatives, at the muster ground at some time. In any case they went away.

Meanwhile, by being myself and without sacrificing anything, I was winning over the workforce as a whole.

Parts of plantations were contracted to workers to weed. These "weeding contracts" were three to ten acres each and the contractors were paid monthly at a fixed rate. Weeding contracts were weeded after work or on the weekends, or full time in the case of large contracts and often the whole family assisted. These contracts usually brought in extra earnings for the workers. Once, when I was walking through a weeding contract, I came across a contractor using a large sorandy¹¹ and told him that I was going to fine him. He pleaded with me not to fine him claiming that he was earning X number of rupees, a fair amount, for his hard work. I smiled at him, genuinely, and said, 'In that case you can afford to pay the fine!' He too, smiled - and acquiesced! He was one from whom I had expected trouble, so this event was my first inkling that I was winning over my workers.

Pay day for the workers, or "pay" as the event was called, was the one situation where the SD or PD faced virtually all his workers as a body. This could be a pleasure or daunting depending on the respect one held and/or the state of relations between the workers and management at the time. Hence, it was one of the important situations wherein to make one's mark with reference to all facets of one's personality, from strict discipline to laughter.

From my first "pay" I set strict procedures in order to make it efficient and speedy, procedures that assisted me as well as my workers. On Carlabek the pay would have totalled Rs 38,000 - 40,000 which, at Rs 300/minute, meant around 2-2^{1/4} hours of paying time. Established pay discipline here was satisfactory and only needed refining.

Bearing in mind that the workers were familiar with when their names would be called, some of these procedures were:

¹⁰ Thappu karan in Tamil.

¹¹ See sixth paragraph below, starting with "Weeders"

Those whose names were down the list were asked to be considerate and move to the back instead of standing in the front and gawping. Those unnecessarily blocking the way of others were reprimanded; those who were close to being called were to move to the front so as to be able to respond to the call without delay; any undue delay meant that they would have to wait until last, up to 2^{1/4} hours away; any claimed shortage between amount read and amount received was to be notified immediately (before re-entering the crowd); any claimed shortfall in pay due would be looked into at the end of pay; anyone intoxicated or smelling of liquor would not be paid; there should be quiet so that names could be heard when called.

On Carlabeck, I sat just inside a factory window and those called came to the window to collect their pay. It must have been soon after I came to this plantation that, during pay, a Subramaniam kangany's name was called but no one appeared. I asked that his name be called again but still no one appeared, and subdued giggles and stifled laughter could be heard. Then, at the ledge in front of me, two hands appeared Subramaniam Kg was a dwarf no more than 3' 6" tall!! Any appearance I had given of authority crumbled and this little incident was enjoyed by all, including me. Subramaniam was the Kangany in charge of the sorting room in the factory, and all the workers in the sorting room were women. I was told at some time that one way in which he asserted his authority was by jumping up and biting any errant worker on the breast! I must say that never during my time on Carlabeck did I notice any disrespect shown to this man because of his dwarfism.

Weeders used an implement called a 'sorandy' and had a small sack tied to their waist, hanging behind them, into which they put the weeds prior to disposal at various points. The sorandy consisted of a flat strip of metal, bent at right angles towards the end, attached to a wooden handle. The sorandies supplied by us were small - the pointed section after the bend being about two inches long. The intended purpose and design of the sorandy was to remove weeds from the ground and base of the bushes with minimal soil disturbance. However, on all plantations across the country, these were substituted, by the workers, with their own sorandies which ranged in size from larger to enormous, and the result was, and had been, very serious soil erosion. I have seen places where the soil level was more than eighteen inches below where it had been originally. Given the chance, the workers took their large sorandies¹² to work to use instead of those supplied.

On Carlabeck, and on all my plantations thereafter, I banned the use of all but regulation size sorandies, a ban that could have caused serious labour trouble but which I assiduously enforced, explaining the reason for the ban. No serious trouble occurred but the ban may have been the cause of the go-slow mentioned in the next paragraph.

At one time there was trouble brewing over weeding costs as there was an undeclared go-slow by the weeding gang, all of whom were children. They were trying to get the weeding task reduced - in my opinion without justification. Discussions made no difference so I resolved to do something possibly never done by anyone before or since. I announced that, first thing the next day I would join the weeders and weed with them to demonstrate that the task they were complaining about was achievable. I gave instructions that a sorandy and weed sack be ready for me next morning and then went away wondering what I had let myself in for! Nevertheless, at 7.30 the next morning I duly arrived at the weeding site, tied on my sack, took my sorandy, took my place in the line of weeders (much to the consternation and incredulity of everyone present) and said, 'All right, let's get started!' - and did.

Half an hour later, my back was aching and my arms, hands and fingers sore, and the weeders were thirty feet ahead of me, racing along at full pelt, not to be outdone by the Dorai. Showing no sign of my physical state, I announced, 'In half an hour you have completed as much as you have and based on that you are quite capable of completing the set task.' That was the end of the matter and I had no further trouble with weeding tasks on Carlabeck.

On most plantations dadaps trees (*Erythrina indica*) were planted as medium shade and for green manure¹³ and when this was done for the first time after my arrival I wanted it done "perfectly"; that is that all cuts were to be perfectly level with each other. I wanted to get the loppers to take pride in their work. I felt that anything done was worth doing well. In other words, I was a perfectionist - a not necessarily perfect trait! Anyway, I managed to get the co-operation of the loppers - with their extremely sharp and dangerous pruning knives - and, so that they knew exactly what I wanted, I climbed a couple of dadaps and lopped them

¹² With two and a half foot handles and six-inch blades.

¹³ The trees were lopped twice a year and the leaf forked into the ground between the tea rows. Forking in was later discontinued and later still, all or some of the dadaps themselves were done away with.

myself, "perfectly"! This had a dramatic effect in more ways than one. The work these men did then, and long thereafter, was excellent and done of their own volition. My PD congratulated me on the impressive lopping and told me that many PDs who used the Radella Shortcut, next to which was the lopped field, were full of praise.

My characteristic of being a taskmaster did not change on Carlabeck and it remained a feature of my management throughout my career although it may have mellowed a little with time. I was very strict and did not countenance any laxity, but this was balanced by an intrinsic love of my workers. By and large, I usually won their support and friendship, and experienced very little "labour trouble" in 17 years.

One day when pluckers were gathered on a field road¹⁴, suddenly, behind me, there was quite a racket. I looked back and saw a man, out of control, thrashing about almost on top of a four-foot high tea bush and doing a good job of demolishing it. To my relief, some seconds later he collapsed and was looked after by some workers. That was my first, and last, experience of someone having an epileptic fit.

Abutting the main lawn of the Carlabeck bungalow was a disused dam, about twenty yards square, that was silted up to about three feet below the bund, and fallow. This dam had once been used for hydropower for the factory. It had been fed from a water source quite a distance away in a neighbouring plantation via an aqueduct that was still in good repair. My PD and I decided that it would be a good idea to drain the dam, fill it, and use it as a swimming pool.



The disused dam in the process of being de-silted. The sluice is in the middle at the right.

We got workers to dig where the sluice should have been and found it six or seven feet down. It was in remarkably good condition and required little work later on to get it working properly. Meanwhile, in the ravine that had been gouged out by years of overflow, we built cross-terraces to catch the silt. When all was ready, we opened the sluice at the source and let the water flow again. Soon we had a large swimming pool into which we put a surplus to requirements section of a metal staircase, as well as a pontoon made of oil

¹⁴ A walking road. All plantations were interspersed with field roads and some "cart roads" (motor roads).

drums in a metal frame. This latter had a timber platform covered in hessian matting. We even toyed with the idea of having a wire shoot over the pool from a large tree in the lawn.

At the rear of the house were disused rooms, previously used as offices etc., and these were used as changing rooms by the PD's family and, later, the numerous CTP executives who came to enjoy themselves, some with their families. All this was no real infringement of my privacy as all this was at the back of the house and, anyway, I enjoyed the whole concept and its aftermath.

After my PD and I had moved elsewhere, Mr. Masfield got wind of this pool and decided that his staff were wasting their time 'cavorting in this playground' (my words) instead of working - an unfounded and gross over-reaction. The then PD, or the General Manager, received a telegram from Mr. Masfield in London that the pool was to be drained forthwith. That was the end of that.



The refilled dam with the bungalow lawn in the background.

Although my PD was really a nice man, and we got on well together, he was at times unpredictable or irritable or difficult, or all three at the same time. Once when we were going round the fields on foot he asked me how many days it was since the field we were in was plucked. For our own use, and in the event that the PD asked, we SDs carried with us a daily updated record of all fields detailing when they were last plucked and sprayed, but on that particular day I had forgotten mine. I had a decision to make: I could make a pretty accurate guess and he would most probably be none the wiser, or I could tell the truth. This I did and got a good telling off as a result. For the next two to three hours I was treated to a plethora of unjustifiable criticism, a diatribe in fact, at the end of which he said to me, much to my surprise, 'Lets go to my bungalow for a drink.' So, we got into his car and went to Somerset and went into his lounge where he poured me a gin and tonic. He did not pour small drinks! We got chatting, and during the course of the chat he explained to me that on certain days, particularly warm ones, the stub of his leg got very sore in its harness and caused him to get very irritable and difficult. He apologised for his behaviour that morning and I accepted it with respect and understanding. The behaviour never occurred again. Also, when I left him that day after a good few gin and tonics, I left my tin of cigarettes in his lounge and he went around thereafter, telling people, in jest of course, that I was responsible for him resuming smoking - which he did!



The refilled dam with the rear of the bungalow in the background.

Once, much earlier I think, I used to shave on every third day as my growth was not heavy, and we met during working hours on the road and he asked me why I hadn't shaved and instructed me to shave daily thereafter as it was scruffy to walk around unshaved. I understood the point of what he was saying and agreed without hesitation - not that it would have been wise to disagree. There were certain things one did not argue about with some of one's PDs - socially perhaps, but not at work about work.

Soon after my coming to Carlabeck the rugby season was due to start and it was generally considered almost obligatory that those who could turn up for practice and/or played for the district team. Although I had not played the game before I had decided to have a go and even bought a pair of boots. I mentioned my intention to my PD who said that I was starting a new career and on (the usual) six months probation, and that he did not agree that I start at that time. Needless to say, I was disappointed. Then, only a matter of a few days before the first day of practice, he phoned and asked me whether I was going for rugby practice, that I should go, and that he would lend me his boots if necessary.

Approximate work times for SDs had evolved on most CTP plantations as follows as far as I know:

Attend muster at 7.00 am, perhaps after a pre-muster discussion with senior divisional staff at 6.30 or 6.45 am.

Work from 7.30 am to 12 noon or 12.30 p.m.

Work from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. followed by evening muster and the weighing of harvested leaf. The latter would take an hour to an hour and a half on normal days, but when there was late plucking (during high cropping periods) this could take a further hour and a half or more; that is to 7.30 p.m. or later. After this, depending on the SD's experience and the PD, one had to complete the checkroll and reconcile it with the amalgamation book

Sleeping during the afternoon, usually after a heavy night at the club, instead of going to work was, though infrequent, a tricky affair as one's PD could phone or, as some did, come to, and into, one's home to

check. This happened to me only once, I think. My PD came in via the front door and I bolted out of through the back door! Missing evening muster was unthinkable.

Most often Sundays and Wednesday afternoons were 'off' and, during the rugby season, Saturday afternoons for players and late afternoon/evenings for spectators. It was, by the way, an unwritten law that one joined the local district club. It was also an unwritten law, certainly in the CTP, that one paid one's club bills on time. In fact, at one club committee meeting, when a list of tardy bill payers was read and one of these was a CTP man, a committee member who was a CTP PD said, 'Did you say XXXXX (His SD)?' and when this was confirmed he said, 'You will have a cheque tomorrow!' - needless to say, not a Company cheque!

TANGAKELLE (CYMRU)

Tangakelle 1032 acres (Cymru 450 acres approx.)

Category - High Grown

1953/54



Tangakelle factory - c.1954.

Tangakelle was in the sub-district of Lindula and consisted of three divisions viz. Tangakelle, Cymru and, some miles away, Walaha, totalling about 1,100 acres.

The Tangakelle PD was on Tangakelle division, which had a Conductor, the senior SD on Cymru and the junior SD on Walaha. The factory was on Tangakelle but was used by Cymru for evening muster and evening leaf weighing and for pay.

The PD of Tangakelle was a dour, crusty old Lincolnshire man with the reputation as one who was bent on looking for mistakes. The PD's bungalow (in particular, it was said, the master bedroom window) looked down from a hill on to the SD's bungalow and the morning muster point which was on the cart road just below the latter. It was said that one PD used to shout instructions and criticisms down to his SD. This positioning of bungalows meant that the PD could hear when the SD arrived back from an evening out, especially because the road to the SD's garage had enough of an upward gradient to make the engine noise of the car (or motorbike) audible in the PD's bungalow - a most inconvenient thing, for the SD that is. At this time, no CTP SDs were permitted to leave their plantations without permission from their PD except on the afternoon of Wednesdays (Club day). In later years this was changed to permission being required only if one were sleeping elsewhere for the night. However, if one was out at a party and returned early in the morning in time for muster it was not considered staying out for the night! Similarly, there was a strict rule that no 'lady' stayed the night, unchaperoned. On the odd occasion that an unchaperoned 'lady' did visit she was put up at the PD's bungalow, provided of course, that he had a wife present. However, it did not matter at what time she returned from the SD's house provided that it was before dawn!



Top: The Cymru SD's bungalow (front). Bottom: The sitting room of the bungalow as it was when I was in occupation.

On one occasion my PD, having met me somewhere on the plantation, told me, 'Your muster was two minutes late this morning.' And my polite reply was, 'That depends on whose watch was correct, Sir.' To this there was, unaccountably and thankfully, no response.

The SD's bungalow was a tiny one. It had two small bedrooms, two small bathrooms, a sitting room and a dining room, both small, and a kitchen, pantry and servants room up a flight of covered steps at the back. Perched as it was on the end of a small, steep ridge the garden around it at the front and two sides was very small although the vegetable garden at the back was a little bigger as the ridge was triangular. Because of these physical features there was no place for a garage by the bungalow; it was by the roadside below, about 100m by field road from the bungalow. Some thirty or forty feet almost immediately below one side of the garden was a cart road leading to the Cymru Upper division 'lines'¹⁵, and children going back and forth used to taunt my young and impressionable German Shepard dog, Emile, who used to bark furiously at them from the edge of the garden. The consequence of this taunting was that, when Emile was with me and we passed or went into the compound of the lines, and the children gathered as they were wont, he would go for them. Until I trained him to come when called, I had to put him on the leash when near the lines. He was a

¹⁵ Workers' quarters built in lines of up to twenty rooms in a line, or 20 rooms per line, back to back, making forty. These were most often in a group.

very intelligent animal whom I trained to attack anyone who raised their hand at me. He and a stout stick I carried with me at all times were my protection against any attack on me. I never carried a knife, which I had, (a sheath knife leftover from my scouting days) or a gun, which I later acquired for sport, as I considered such behaviour to be unwise for many reasons. One day in the factory, where the pluckers' evening leaf was weighed on the first floor, Emile was lying at my feet under the table as he usually did, when a plucker came towards me with her hands clasped together at her upper chest in the customary act of respect, and Emile, mistaking this for a threat to me, took off from under the table at this woman just a few feet away. I yelled to him to come back and he obeyed immediately. This incident may have given thought to anyone who later felt inclined to harm me but there were really no indications of such a prospect on Cymru at any time.



The Cymru SD's bungalow as it would be seen from the PD's bungalow - c.1954.

Because the bungalow garden was so small, I thought that one way to enlarge it a little at the front was to introduce some poria¹⁶ into a few bushes there and let it spread. This I did, with my conscience in turmoil because it was dishonest and against everything I stood for. I even forgot to realise that it would be years before the desired effect would be achieved. To this day, whenever I think of this, the memory hits me in the stomach.

There were two workers' unions, the CWC and the DWC but, from memory, the workforce was not a difficult one.

I had by this time realised that, in the field, the further from the road one got, and the more steep the land, the worse was the standard of work. This was mainly due to the fact that kanganies and other supervisory staff, including many (most?) PDs and SDs, were disinclined to put in the effort to check the work in these places. I made it a point to do this as well as demand the same of my staff though this only with moderate success despite many fines and castigation. A great deal of my "management by walking around" was off the roads, and at times, starting at the top somewhere, I would descend randomly through the tea. I also often checked work a day or two after it had been completed and the workers long gone, but if there was any bad work the culprit/s heard about it one way or another. This method of supervision I adhered

¹⁶ A virulent root fungus deadly to tea, which slowly spread through the soil killing out the bushes in enlarging patches around the initial infection.

to on all plantations. On some I even opened up a few areas by converting, at little cost but to great benefit, field drains into field paths.



Another view of the Cymru SD's bungalow. Just visible are the garage below and the field path thence to the bungalow - c.1954.

"Jat" was a corruption of the Tamil word for type or variety and, in the case of tea, colloquially referred to the type of hybrid ranging from the twiggy, small-leaf bush from China (low jat) to the large-leaf tree type from Assam (high jat). Low jat was low yielding and low growing, and high jat high yielding and would grow into a medium sized tree if it were not pruned. Until the advent of vegetatively propagated tea in the late forties, all tea planted was hybrid, the hybridity ranging indeterminately, according to random pollination, between low and high jat. The higher the jat the taller the bushes grew between prunings and I experienced fields up to four and a half feet high when nearing pruning. Fields like this were not only tall but the bushes in them formed a complete cover through which one had to push; something which, in wet weather, wet my body from armpits down and I used to stop walking as little as possible. For the pluckers it was much worse because they had to move slowly, plucking one bush at a time, and often used to shiver throughout the day. In the case of the taller bushes, they often had to climb onto the frame of the bush in order to reach the leaves at the top. They used a special blanket called a "kumblie" that had been waterproofed by the application of an extract of the tamarind seed. The kumblie was folded in such a manner that it fitted over their heads and hung down, covering their backs, arms and legs but not the front. As for me, I had long since dispensed with a raincoat¹⁷ as it restricted leg movement when I was off the road, and that was most of the time, and also got torn in no time. An umbrella was just about useless and an encumbrance. When I was wearing gumboots and it was raining, I had to stop every so often to rest my heels, one at a time of course, in the fork of a shade tree to let the water flow out of the boots. However, some water in the boot was helpful, if noisy, as it got warmed by body heat. The result of all this was that in wet weather I would be sopping wet and have to change at lunchtime as well as before evening muster. The pluckers had no such luxury. For weeders rain was a worse problem because they had to bend over to reach the ground as they went about their work.

¹⁷ In terms of years it did not take me long to eschew protection such as this and wear only shorts and socks, and sometimes long trousers in very cold conditions.

Cymru No. 2 field was a high jat field and was relatively flat. It had been pruned since my arrival but brought into post pruning production by me and was being plucked by a specialist gang of pluckers referred to as "new field"¹⁸ pluckers. These pluckers earned more because new fields yielded more than old fields, stimulated as they were by the recent pruning. As fields advanced in their pruning cycle, at this elevation four years, growth slowed and yields reduced. Correspondingly, younger fields had to be plucked every six of seven days and older ones every ten.

From the start of bringing this field into production, I applied my perfectionist standards by diligently guiding the pluckers to apply themselves to a very high standard with both carrot and stick. The result of the teamwork was a field whose bushes looked like flat tables - a remarkable achievement. I had never seen anything like it and nor had my PD. Around about this time the CTP Chairman arrived on a visit and, according to my PD, stopped in the middle of this field and, looking around, said, 'This is a picture of perfection!' I do not recall if he put that in his report.



Cymru # 2 field, the Chairman's "Picture of perfection."

At some time thereafter it occurred to me to do something else with this and the other new fields. Because mature fibres in the stalks of plucked leaf were detrimental to good quality manufactured tea, pluckers were made to spend up to half an hour, three times a day before their leaf was weighed, that is one and a half hours per day in eight, picking out as many stalks as possible. This, to me, was a terrible waste of time, and the process also resulted in bruising of the leaf to some extent - also detrimental to the quality of the final product.

¹⁸ Newly pruned field.

I concluded that if the fields were plucked every two or three days, and the shoots to be plucked carefully selected, three things would happen viz. 1. Over-maturity of stalks would be eliminated, thus eliminating the need for picking over the leaf prior to weighing, 2. The pluckers would have an extra hour and a half per day for work productive for themselves (they were paid an incentive bonus over a certain weight plucked) as well as the Company, and 3. Since all shoots were picked at optimum maturity they would be at optimum weight and, therefore, increase yield.

So, how to put this into practice?

I started by selecting from the very best of the "new field" pluckers a mature and respected lady who, together with the "new field" Kangany, reported to me the following day in No. 2 Field. I spent the day with this plucker teaching her to pick only those shoots that were ready, and leave anything that would be exactly ready in three days time. The Kangany learned by listening and observing. On the next day, I introduced another of the best pluckers who was taught by the first and me and observed by the Kangany. On the day after that, two new pluckers were introduced and each was taught by the experienced two. On the day after that, four recruits were selected and taught by the earlier four. Next, eight for eight and so on till all the new field pluckers, between thirty and forty if I remember correctly, were trained. Meanwhile, of course, the Plucking KP and others were brought into the picture.



Self weighing leaf in Cymru # 2 Field with Emile at my feet.

There was another discipline that had to be rigorously enforced, apart from the other usual ones such as maintaining levels, and that was that of always leaving at least one leaf above the first leaf, usually a modified one (small and thick), "for the bush". The theory was that a full leaf should be left "for the bush" so as to maintain its canopy and maintain the process of photosynthesis by which it produced new leaf. This was a constant and valid battle on all plantations, and in this new practice I said that I would fine each

plucker fifty cents, a high fine, for each error in this regard, and there was a 25¢ fine for other infringements. The end result was that we plucked the new fields every three days and the pluckers harvested huge quantities, sometimes 130 lbs/day or more (it could have been 180 lbs) compared with say 80 lbs/day previously, and earned excellent money; so much so that they used to say, 'Dorai, we don't care if you fine us 50¢ per "strip"¹⁹, we are earning so much that it does not matter!' In fact, there was little or no stripping; that which occurred was not intentional. For reasons I cannot remember I did not introduce this practice on any other plantation.

Abutting the Cymru Upper lines was a field, 3A or 3B, the bottom part of which the residents used as their toilet. Infants and the very young used the drains outside their line doors. This was not surprising as the old style of housing (lines) only provided about one lavatory per five families. However, checking on work in this area was a horrifying experience. The ground under the tea bushes, and the field road which ran through this part, were almost completely covered in excreta of varying colours, textures and smells. The stench was appalling and became worse with the disturbance one's shoes inevitably caused. I vividly remember my PD leading me through this area on one of his field rounds: he was slithering and slipping because the ground was sloping, and cursing articulately. Despite the taxing circumstances, I could not but chuckle, but one had to give him his due - he was conscientious enough to go to the area. Perhaps he thought he would catch me out? Anyway, it was not a place where one could do much observation of work as one was preoccupied with keeping one's balance, making sure that, if one slipped one successfully grabbed the tea bushes for support, and trying to survive without breathing. This was always a literally sickening experience.

At this time the CTP had quite a big capital programme of building new accommodation for the workers, a programme that continued for about ten years. These were units consisting of a small verandah at the front, a front room, a bedroom, a kitchen and a toilet - a vast improvement on those previously built - and were built in pairs. In time, I was to discover that many of those to whom these new units were allocated, were using the toilets to store things or as chicken coups, so I told them that they were not to do this as the toilets were meant to be used. Some responded, but many continued undeterred. Having tried cajoling and advising I started fining miscreants Rs 1 each time I found the toilets used for anything but the intended purpose. The district representative of the union expressed his disapproval of the fines but, when I explained the reasons for my actions, he could not but agree with what I was doing. In any case I had no intention of doing otherwise. My activities in this regard, particularly my habit of frequently checking toilets, caused the workers to give me, not unkindly, the nickname of "Kakus Dorai" (Toilet Master) - a sobriquet I was quite happy to live with!

Dadaps were cultivated for green manure and shade for the tea, but their leaves were also good fodder for cows, and there were quite a few of these in sheds around the lines. Unfortunately, although most cow owners had dadaps growing as fences around their gardens for this purpose, these did not provide enough fodder even with the grass the owners used to grow and harvest in ravines and/or low wet areas unsuitable for tea. The consequence of this was that they used to steal dadap leaves from the fields, often causing much damage to the trees in the process, and that this theft and damage had to be dealt with by vigilance and fines.

In the Upper division there was a five-acre weeding contract allocated to a family for the purpose of keeping occupied a senior female family member. I was unaware of this when, early in my time here, in the field I heard mumblings and grumblings and the sound of a sorandy. When I said something a woman stood up in the tea and started ranting and raving at me and waving her sorandy around in the air, apparently threateningly. My enquiries revealed that her name was Sellamma, that she had at one time worked for a PD somewhere as a 'nanny', and that she was off her head. I was told that she was harmless, but I also heard from the PD of the plantation next door, which shared a boundary with Sellamma's contract, that he had strayed into her contract, or reached her boundary, and had got the shock of his life when he was confronted by a virago. He said that he made a hasty exit!

I felt sorry for this lady and tried to communicate with her and gain her confidence and friendship. This effort was motivated by sympathy as well as the fact of it being a challenge. All I managed, over a long time, was to make myself more or less accepted in her domain. She calmed down and, at times, used to talk to me in her incomprehensible way. I thought I sometimes picked up references to her employer of old. I got the feeling, or heard, that her mental breakdown had been caused by unrequited love or something of that nature.

¹⁹ Not leaving the important one leaf above the first was called stripping. Hence, a "strip".

As intimated above, many workers had small gardens, usually across the yard from their linerroom. The fences of these gardens consisted, at least in part, of live fencing such as dadap stakes that took root and grew. What I discovered was that these gardens were artfully and gradually enlarged by a periodical shifting of the fence into the tea which, when it was within the fence, was removed. So as to put an end to this practice I made it a point to periodically inspect these fences at random.

That year funds had been approved in the "estimates"²⁰ for a new cart road of about one and a half miles through fields No.1 and 2. When the time came I enthusiastically put into practice what I had learned during my creeping on Glenlyon. To determine the course of the road we only had a very basic, but adequate, instrument called a road tracer from which one read levels and gradients. My PD did some of this himself and kept an eye on what I did during the marking of the road's path through the tea, but in determining the camber on the corners and on the straighter stretches I used my own initiative. What I found very useful was to visualise how water would flow on the road surface and camber so as to minimise the distance of flow at any given point. This proved to be very effective. Needless to say due consideration was given, in terms of camber, to the suitability of the completed road for vehicular traffic. I also insisted on a very smooth finish to the road bank - of no practical use but it looked good. I also felt that it created in the workers a pride in their work. This was a fascinating project for me and, I suspect, for my PD. By the time the road was complete I was aware that my PD wanted to be the first to drive along the road, but so did I! Hence it became a matter of planning and timing, and I, being on the spot so to speak, had the advantage, and won the 'race'. I must say that my PD showed no signs of rancour as a result of this, and he did drive through after I did.

The PD had acquired a new implement for uprooting tea, called a Monkey Grubber, and told me to meet him at a particular place so that he could show me how it worked. It was a winch mechanism encased in metal, with cables coming out of both ends. One end was for attaching to the tea bush and the other to a suitable anchor, and for the anchor he chose a medium sized Grevillea. Then, having made sure that all was safe he gave the order for the winch handle to be operated. All eyes were focused on the tea bush but, although the winch was working, nothing was happening to the bush - but the Grevillea fell over!

Beetle nut chewing was commonplace amongst the workers but, mainly because of the spitting out of beetle juice that this habit entailed, chewing it was banned in the factories. One day the PD was walking outside the factory when he was splattered with part of a jet of beetle juice emitted from somewhere in the upper floors of the factory, most likely not aimed at him. His reaction was very quick. He rushed into the factory, sealed off the upper floors, and proceeded to find the culprit. Some found this amusing. This PD commanded respect, but it was the nature of the man that was responsible for any misadventure to him causing respectful amusement.

At the end of each day Cymru workers mustered outside the front of the factory where, under the shelter afforded by the first floor, the Head KP entered in the checkroll the details of work done that day. On the first floor above him, accessed by two flights of stairs, the weighing of the pluckers leaf was done by the Plucking KP in my presence. They came up one flight of stairs and went out via the other. On one day when men had been plucking, they were lined up in a disorderly fashion on the entry stairs when beetle spit splattered the Head KP and the checkroll. As it was not clear as to who was responsible the Plucking KP showed remarkable presence of mind and astuteness. He immediately ushered into the room those men who were uppermost on the stairs and then, to identify the culprit, put his hand on the chest of each one in turn until he came across a palpitating heart, and then announced triumphantly, 'Here is the culprit!' He then turned to the "Saak Kaaran"²¹ and said, 'Bring me a glass of water.' This having been brought, the KP went to the culprit, whose mouth was still full of the beetle nut mix, and commanded him to drink all the water (and with it the stuff in his mouth!). This mix is strong and not pleasant if swallowed. Everyone was greatly amused by this incident. No punishment was meted out by me as the humiliation and discomfort he suffered was enough.

My PD had taken an interest in what I was doing in the Cymru bungalow garden and paid many brief visits there to have a look.

Because the defunct Scrubs factory was being dismantled, the PD on Somerset, the one who was there when I was last there, had requested the temporary transfer of an SD to, primarily, oversee this work

²⁰ Budget.

²¹ Sack coolie - the one in charge of leaf sacks.

and record all items and materials extracted. I was selected for this and moved to Somerset in about January 1954.

SOMERSET (SCRUBS)

Special assignment plus normal duties covering Scrubs 190 acres as well as Easdale and Carlabeck at c.424 acres totalling c.614 acres.

Category - High Grown.

1954

Because the reason for my return to Somerset was primarily to do with the dismantling of the factory, and possibly because of the condition of the Carlabeck bungalow, I was accommodated in the one time Scrubs PDs house. This was a fairly new two-storey house situated on the edge of the plantation, on the main road in the Nuwara Eliya town. In January, the town, and this house, were very cold, the town being at an elevation of about 8000 ft. The position of PD Scrubs/ CTP Office Manager had been scrapped, Scrubs incorporated into Somerset, and the CTP, or General Manager's, Office put in charge of the long time Head Clerk.

In addition to the work involving the Scrubs factory I was given responsibility for my two previous divisions of Carlabeck and Easdale as well as Scrubs.

Due to the elevation of Scrubs its tea was slow growing, the leaves small, the bushes dense with branches, and forming a dense cover over the ground. Fields were pruned once every six years. Apart from these factors, and the cold at that time of the year, it was no different to Glenlyon, Carlabeck or Cymru. Around the month of January early morning temperatures could drop to just below freezing, and walking through wet tea in such temperatures was not pleasant. A few years later, in some plantations, about 400 acres at this elevation were lost to frost, and plantations as low as about 4500 ft. experienced frost but not sufficiently severe to cause much damage. Bushes usually recovered from severe damage after a few months. When frost was expected workers were organized to spray the bushes with water sufficiently early in the morning to have the job completed before the sun warmed the bushes as it was this warming that caused the frozen cells to rupture.

The three months passed uneventfully but before I was due to leave I got a letter from the GM telling me that I had got a bad report from the Somerset PD and reprimanding me. I was completely shocked as there had been absolutely no indication of a bad report, and was hell bent on writing to the GM to ascertain the reasons for an adverse report and to defend myself. However, my Glenlyon PD prevailed upon me to lie low and just reply to the GM regretting the report, and stating that this sort of thing would not happen again. As it happened there was no aftermath and, some time later, the Glenlyon PD told me that he had met the Somerset PD at the club and the latter had said to him, no doubt during a discussion, referring to me, "That man will never forgive me." This was, of course, a load of rubbish because, from my point of view, there was nothing to forgive. When we met, we always met as friends. To this day however, I have not been able to put my finger on the reason for his adverse report. Over the years I was interested to work this out and the only possibility I have ever been able to think of, and one without foundation whatsoever, was that his wife used to swim at Carlabeck and change in the rooms at the back of the bungalow, and that, for some obscure reason, had affected his judgement.

TANGAKELLE (CYMRU)

Tangakelle 1032 acres (Cymru 450 acres approx.)

Category - High Grown

1953/54

On my return to Cymru, Tangakelle had a new PD and one of the first things he did was to say to me something to this effect, 'Regarding that report, just put it behind you and let's prove that it was quite wrong.' This PD was in his early thirties, was from a farming family in England and therefore had a sound agricultural background. He was an innovative thinker and was completely free of airs and graces.

Not long after my return to Cymru I was told by my gardener that the previous PD had often come to the Cymru bungalow to keep an eye on things in my absence, that he used to bring plants from his garden for mine, and that he once said, 'That SD is the best SD for you people.'

Prior to this, Tangakelle had a piggery on Cymru containing a couple of dozen pigs and a boar, plus piglets. The main purpose of this piggery seemed to be the provision of urine and manure for addition to the large compost piles in the shed attached to it. Weeds were transported from the fields to the sheds where they were combined with the urine and manure to form large aerated heaps of 10 tons each, that were returned to the fields when ready. Some of this went into the PD's and SD's bungalow gardens with startlingly positive results. The new PD decided to husband the pigs on a commercial scale according to modern techniques and, in time, there were over two hundred animals on Cymru and on Walaha, where he had built another piggery.

The stud boar was a huge beast. It was black, 6 - 7 ft. long, about 2½ ft. tall at the shoulder and had very thick skin. Although very formidable looking, the look belied his true character. When he had got to know me I could stand next to him and pet him. At one time he got ill and the vet prescribed an injection of penicillin. It was decided that the best person to administer this was the Tangakelle Dispenser²². He was a relatively frail man who, on seeing the boar, was plainly fearful. Anyway, he duly prepared his syringe and tentatively approached the animal while the pig-keeper and I stood on either side of the boar, one towards the rear and the other towards the head. After a lot of dithering the Dispenser finally had the needle correctly poised..... then pushed it in and pressed the plunger. To his consternation, and the pig-keeper's and my surprise (and subdued hilarity!), a jet of fluid flew up into his face. In amazement he looked at the needle - there it was, bent in a half circle, pointing straight at him! The boar's skin was so thick that the needle did not penetrate. The poor Dispenser had had enough and was neither up to nor willing to have another go! Later, the vet came, filled a syringe, took the needle off it, slapped the needle into the pig's rump and, when it had come to a stop after a small squeal and a few steps, attached the syringe to the embedded needle and completed the job.

In tea too, science was starting to modernise practices. The Tea Research Institute had been working on the vegetative propagation of tea and had selected a range of clones for commercial planting on a large scale. The intellectually dormant business of growing tea was on the move, and for many of us ahead lay a time of great strides. This PD was soon to start his own programme of VP selection, a few acquiring sufficient status to be planted on CTP plantations and trialled elsewhere, but whether on a large scale or not I am not sure. They bore the prefix TK and TK 9 was one of them.

He also started the reclamation of ravines, having obviously done this previously. On all plantations up to 0.25% of the acreage was waterlogged ravines and these could be drained and planted in tea. He would have the existing drains cleaned out, and deepened if necessary, lay two parallel lines of stones²³ about four inches apart, cover them with a line of flattish stones, cover the resulting tunnel with a complete layer of thatch, and then fill in the drains. After drained of water and cleared of troublesome grasses, these would be planted in tea.

At one time my PD wanted to demonstrate to me one of the new methods of inducing spread in young tea plants, that of bending branches outwards horizontally, and made arrangements to meet me in No. 1 field at 2.30 one afternoon. At 2.30 that afternoon I walked past the appointed spot having totally forgotten the appointment. I was not a forgetful person, in fact, quite the opposite, but this was the day I did forget! About half an hour later, I was still doing my round when the PD comes up behind me in his car and says, 'Where the hell have you been?' THEN I remembered! I apologised profusely for my lapse; and he said, 'Half

²² The resident Apothecary (called Dispenser).

²³ Field stones from the area.

an hour ago I could have killed you, but now I am OK.' I don't think he even said, 'Don't do it again'. If he had it would have been unnecessary.

In the factories tea was made, stored, packed and accounted for by weight. Hence, stocks in the factory at any time were by weight, and the weight depended on the moisture content of the tea. If my memory serves me correctly, the target maximum moisture-content in tea in the factory was around 3.4% to allow for an increase to around 8% on arrival in the UK. A plantation the size of Tangakelle would, based on yields at that time, carry a stock of, say, 100,000 lbs at any one time. If the records of manufacture were manipulated to show a moisture-content of 3.15% instead 3.4%, a .25 % reduction, the factory stocks would show 250 lbs less in stock than there should be - a hidden surplus.

What was happening on many plantations at the time was that Tea Makers were doing this and smuggling out of the plantations, by many devious means, and usually at night, such "surpluses". The main reason that this practice was workable was the habit of executive staff to check stocks on the same day each month, usually the last day of the month. Some even gave notice of a stock take to the TM if it was not on the last day of the month. If stocks were checked without warning and at random, the TM would get caught with an unexplainable surplus.

My PD received information that this was happening at his factory and arranged to be forewarned as to when it was next due to happen. He did not tell me about this. One night he was forewarned very early in the morning and phoned me but got no answer. So he sent his bungalow/office watchman to my house but I was not there. He then phoned the SD on Walaha who hurriedly drove the seven or so miles to Tangakelle and the two of them, with a few others I think, rushed to the factory and apprehended some workers in the act on behalf of the TM. I understand that a deft rugby tackle by the SD brought down one individual. I was only "out late" and not out for the night and I do not recall a dressing down. I do seem to recall that it was more a matter of my PD relating to me the sequence of events than complaining about my absence. In any event the rigidity with which these rules were applied was waning and we were moving to the times when all an SD had to do was advise his PD that he would be away for the night.

On one January 1st during this stint on Cyrmu I had returned from the club in my dinner suit just in time for morning muster, but I did go up to the bungalow to change, although SDs conducting muster in their dinner suits was not unknown. That morning, in a very delicate state of health, I went round the fields keeping well away from any living being. I was simply flying the flag so to speak! Early in the morning, I was on the road leading from the PD's bungalow to the factory when I saw the PD's car approaching at a distance. In the twinkling of an eye I had leapt off the road and into the tea to become invisible in a drain - and the PD's car went past. He told me later that he had looked for me to ask me to check the plantation stocks, a big and fiddly job at the best of times, but, having failed to find me, had asked the junior SD, from Walaha, to do it. In due course, he apologised for having had to do this and I said that it was quite all right. I cannot recall what that SD had to say to me!

There was one particular kangany who should never have been given supervisory duties. No doubt he got them because he was the head of a group of people he, or his antecedents, had brought out from India. Generally, this was, and had been, the criterion for appointment as a Kangany. He was a very small, old man whom no one respected in the field; in fact, workers used to treat him as a joke. He was a plucking Kangany and was always getting into trouble with me for bad supervision. One evening I had docked his pay for the whole day as a result of bad work and, as I was driving back home after work I passed him, small and frail, and hunched a little over his walking stick, and having lost a whole day's pay. I nearly wept. But what was one to do? For overall efficient management it was essential that one maintained discipline, especially where large workforces were concerned, such as those on plantations.

I was concerned about the power I had over my workers. I could sack them, fine them or send them home for bad work or behaviour (with no pay for the rest of the day), but I was, really, very fond of them and, though strict, was always willing to help them, even with their personal problems. I had, in fact, a moral dilemma, and it was only about two years later, perhaps as a result of reading a book, that I resolved this. I came to understand that one had an equal responsibility to one's employer and to one's staff and workers - in the case of the latter, individually **and** collectively. In the broader context, the interests of the employer and those of the employee were inextricably linked. A good standard of work and good morale increased production and productivity to the benefit of both parties, and the converse was equally true.

On one afternoon per week both PDs and SDs would have what was called "labour day". This was the main time when the "Thalaivar", the resident workers' union representative, or individual workers communicated with management and vice versa. Urgent matters could be raised at any time during any day and miscreants were sometimes told to attend for special attention. Small inquiries into breaches of the peace or discipline were held during these afternoon periods, but long inquiries were held at other times, some

times over two or three days. Labour days were the time when workers could also seek help with personal and/or family matters and, in order to maintain the privacy of my home, no one was permitted within the garden except at "labour day" time. In any event, these sorts of matters were usually dealt with by the Head Kangany. One night my servant came to me and told me that there was a worker at the back wanting to see me. I told him to send the man away. He returned to say that the man would not leave, and I repeated what I had said before. He returned to say that the man would not leave. Angry, I got up, marched out to the back, and dealt the man a blow to the side of the head that sent him into the hedge and thence away. Nothing further was heard about this. Had he taken his problem to the Head Kangany and the latter, being unable to resolve it, had decided that it warranted my attention at such a time and come to see me with the man, my response would have been different.

As in most plantations there were on Cymru, two unions, the DWC and the CWC, and one of the Thalaivars was named Veeriah, aged about thirty. He had a strong personality and a commitment to doing his union job well, and there was I with the same commitment. Consequently, when we met, the atmosphere was 'charged' - largely due to the inexperience of both. However, there was respect and discipline on both sides.

In time, Veeriah so impressed me that I decided that he would excel as a kangany in the field and put this proposition to him one day. He thanked me and said, in effect, that he could not serve two masters at one time and, therefore, could not accept the offer, but went on to say that his term as Thalaivar would end in three months and that he would then gladly accept. Three months later he was appointed as a kangany.

This appointment was a simple challenge for me but a huge one for Veeriah for he was a low cast Tamil in a predominantly high cast workforce; and low caste people did not give orders to high caste people! He did, however, have a quiet strength, a certain dignity, and he may have gained a certain amount of respect as Thalaivar. In any event, I considered the caste system immoral and totally unjustifiable and unacceptable in the workplace, so I made it known that I would not, under any circumstances, tolerate any disrespect to the new kangany. For his part he, from the very first day, dressed smartly in clean clothes, and looked the part. He also demonstrated an aptitude for the job. There was an occasion early in the piece when, at the start of work, fifty or sixty pluckers were squabbling over who would pluck which row of tea. Wasting no time, Veeriah solved the matter by getting them to draw lots - something I had never seen done before. His work proved to be good and there was no trouble about his caste as far as I was aware.

One day when the PD was away, I was informed that the Tangakelle division Conductor had been assaulted by some workers and was badly injured. I went to my car and hurried to where he was, and found that he had a depressed fracture of the skull, two to three inches in diameter, and was in great pain. I drove him to the hospital and, on the way, he told me what had happened. He was on a field road in a remote part of the division when he was attacked by a few workers. In the course of the attack he fell off the road and was lying prone when one of the assailants hefted a large stone, about eighteen inches by nine inches, above his head and hurled it down at his, the Conductor's, head. Fortunately, it hit his head and the ground at the same time.

My dog, Emile, was now about eighteen months old and I had trained him to go home from anywhere on the division if he was told to. He was quite docile unless he or I was threatened. At the end of each pay there was usually unpaid cash left over and, one day, I gave him the tied bag of cash and told him to take it home. This he did with great enthusiasm. I was sure that no one would dare try to take the bag from him. I did this a couple of times only.

As there were Saak Kaarans there were Saak Kutties, a kutty being a young woman. These latter were the youngest of the pluckers and ranged in age between eighteen and, say, twenty-two years, and were detailed to assist at leaf weighing times and to carry the filled mesh sacks (about 45 lbs each if not over-filled) to the nearest lorry pick up point and one often passed one, some or all of them when in the fields. One of these, Sellamma, appeared to have fallen in love with me judging by the way she looked at me. She was tall and slim, but well proportioned, and if a wraith of temptation did arise, it was dismissed by me as any such association with one's female workers was taboo for two reasons: 1. It was against Company rules, and would result, we were told, in instant dismissal 2: one could be held to ransom by the girl's family and 3: it generally undermined one's ability to manage the workforce. This latter was borne out some months later when the Plucking KP told me that, that evening, Sellamma's uncle was coming to muster to confront me with the claim that she and I were having an intimate relationship. That evening the uncle approached me in the crowded weighing up area but, before he spoke, I said to him, in no uncertain terms, 'If you say what I think you are going to say, I will sack you!' He decided against saying anything and went away.

A year or so later I visited the then SD on Cymru and Sellamma's father came up to me and told me that she had burned to death one day when her sari was ignited by the flame of a lamp in their home. He said, 'That happened because of what she said about you.' Naturally, I did not believe any such thing and said

something in reply to soothe his mind and heart. In this incident is an indication of the true quality of these people. Occasionally, over the years, I have remembered this sad story and seen, in my minds eye, that poor girl with her lovelorn eyes. What thoughts, what hopes filled that heart and mind?

Inevitably, I moved on from Cymru and when I was driving away I was amazed and humbled by the whole gang of new field pluckers who stopped work and rushed down their rows to the edge of the embankment of the road to farewell me.



My Cymru #2 Field plucking specialists.

DEWALAKANDE (DEWALAKANDE)

(c.950 acres)

1955/57

Dewalakande²⁴ literally means "temple hill" in Sinhala. Within the plantation is an almost isolated hill about some 300 feet high, and on the top of this hill is a rock about sixty feet long, an average of ten feet wide and a height of about three feet at the centre tapering to the ground all round. On the top, lengthwise for about eight feet, is a fissure whose depth had never been determined and this fissure always contains water whose level never varies more than a couple of inches either way - no matter how dry the weather. It only overflowed **during** heavy rain. Because of this unusual phenomenon, the rock was revered and treated as a temple although no building was ever erected.

During my tenure the field in which the temple was situated was clear felled of old rubber trees and, as was the normal procedure, the felled trees were sectioned and stacked in piles for burning during the impending dry season, prior to the seeding of the cover crop and the planting of new trees. Throughout the dry season the exposed hill, like any other "new clearing", got extremely hot, yet this had no effect on the level of water in the fissure. My theory was, and is, that the subterranean hydrostatic pressure and the atmospheric pressure were equal and opposite at the level of the water in the fissure. According to this theory the water level should be constant at all times so I will leave to hydrologists the explanation of the slight variation that occurs in the water level at some times other than during rain.

Dewalakande, approximately 2032 acres, comprised 3 divisions viz. Dewalakande (approx. 690 acres), Dunedin (approx. 687 acres), Troy (approx. 455 acres) plus a remote block, Humbaswalana, of about 200 acres past Troy, which was sold some time between 1956 and 1963. The accepted norm for workers per acre on rubber was .75 and, on all divisions, half the workforce or more were Sinhalese, almost all coming from surrounding villages - some 15 miles away. I heard that one girl used to walk 15 miles daily to work, to start at 7.30 am, and walk back after work. With the exception of a few Sinhalese families, the resident workers were Tamil. Troy and Dunedin were each about 7 miles from Dewalakande in an arc of about 45° apart. There was an SD on each division and a KP on the remote block. Dewalakande itself was divided into two sub-divisions - Dewalakande and Maboya in the proportion of approximately 2/3rd and 1/3rd respectively, the former having a Conductor and the latter a KP. The main factory, where sole crepe was made, was on Dewalakande and the other, where brown crepe was made, on Dunedin. This brown crepe was the lowest grade of rubber which was made from what is called scrap: that is the congealed strip of latex that remains on the tapping cut as a natural seal after the latex has finished flowing. The main factory was well known for the beauty of many of the young women working in it, and it was said that girls were hired for their looks to maintain this reputation. I think that it was at this time that I heard that, to qualify for employment in this factory the applicants had to submit to sex with the RM who, de facto, hired and fired the factory workers. But more of this later.

The SD on Dewalakande had a Company motorbike, a 125 cc BSA, and the Conductor may have had one too. The PD had a Company Land Rover for work, and his own car for private use, although the former could be used for private purposes as well.

The PD's two storey house was almost adjacent to the main factory and, from there, it was a mile up a hill to the SD's bungalow almost at the top. It was a small but modern bungalow with two bedrooms. A point on this road was notorious amongst CTP executives for being haunted, and there were many first-hand accounts of strange things happening when passing a spot where, it was said, a woman had once hanged herself from a tree that still existed. It was on the boundary of Dewalakande and the adjacent property at a point where the road to the SD's bungalow touched the boundary. When driving on this road at various times of the night I sometimes slowed to a crawl past that spot - with the car in low gear so as to "make a dash for it" if necessary - hoping to see or feel something, but with no success. However, I did have an experience of a similar vein.

My mother was visiting and we were at dinner when a weird and haunting sound started down at the bottom of the hill about where the haunted tree was. From that start it built up to the extent that I thought that a large crowd of wailing women was coming up the hill. The sound, at its peak, was blood curdling. Both my mother and I put down our knives and forks, and listened in awe. The next day I asked one of the field

²⁴ Devala = temple + kanda = hill. Pronounced "they - var - la + kun* - the" (* as in bun).

watchmen whether there were "ulamas"²⁵ in the area, and he confirmed that there often were. I told him what had happened and he said that it would have been an ulama.

Compared to the green vistas and cool air of an upcountry tea plantation, and the superb smell from the tea factory, a rubber plantation was gloomy under the dense canopy of seventy-foot trees except in new plantings where trees were smaller and the canopy had not covered over, and the factories created unpleasant odours. My bungalow was in a well of tall, dark trees. Fortunately, there was a break in the trees in front of it and one could see the distant hills. There were also snakes, leeches and mosquitoes. The snakes and leeches became only a minor problem but the mosquitoes, particularly in the field, were a major nuisance. However, none of all this had a significantly negative effect on me, I barely thought of it if I thought of it at all - the present was the present and that was that. On the other hand, I did find the, at times, high temperatures and very high humidity very unpleasant.



Self - SD on Dewalakande c.1955

Rubber was new to me so there was a lot to learn from the agricultural standpoint. There was also the opportunity to learn about the manufacturing side although my responsibilities did not include the factory. All told, this was part of my job with the CTP and I made the best of it. For the first eight years or so after replanting, the ground cover creeper introduced at the time of re-planting, grew rapidly into a dense

²⁵ A nocturnal bird of prey then thought to be either a type of owl or a type of hawk.

cover almost three feet high concealing holes, unburned logs, drains and..... snakes! The most notable of these were cobras and Russell's vipers. The former try to avoid trouble and, if not aggravated, do not attack. In fact, stories were rife of cobras being found harmlessly curled up, asleep, with infants, as are stories of resident wild, but harmless, cobras in village houses. On the other hand, the Russell's viper is fat and sluggish and does not move out of the way; it attacks if trampled, frightened or aggravated. The bites of both these snakes are said to be fatal if the biting snake is a big one. Both cobras and the vipers could grow to six feet and more (my PD shot an eight or nine foot Russell's viper in his front garden. It was about 3" in diameter at its thickest point). Proper supervision required that we walked through this cover crop and the workers, of course, worked in it. On Dewalakande division we had about one serious case of snakebite each year and, although antivenin was kept in the PD's fridge, I am not aware of it ever being used; the workers preferring to go to the local ayurvedic physician. I saw one Russell's viper victim whose body, the day after he was bitten, was swollen to 125% its normal size and, yet, within a week he was up and about. At some time I had decided that, if I were bitten, I too would call in the ayurvedic physician. In addition to the vipers, cobras and sundry smaller snakes there were a few rock pythons. In ideal conditions and after many, many years, these can exceed thirty feet in length, but those present here were said to be in a small patch of rather steep rocky scrub (above #2 Field DWK?) through which a field path ran. I never saw one.

The Conductor of my division was a man who used foul language, at loud volume, as a means of controlling the workers. I doubted that this artifice worked, as it seemed more to engender humour than compliance. Compliance and respect came as a result of his position and true personality. He was quite a character - and paranoid about snakes! When the tappers brought in their pails of latex, some very large, at the end of their day²⁶ they would line up in preparation for the checking of the specific gravity of their latex and its volume to calculate the solids content by which they were paid. To increase volume, adulteration with water was common. The Conductor, if he was present at the time, used to walk up and down this long line, ranting and raving as he was wont, and pirouetting at either end. One day, a young lad who had killed a five foot rock python, tied a string round its head and slung the other end of the string over his shoulder, walked into the area to claim a snake bounty or to show off his kill, or both, and his path followed the Conductor to the end of the line of tappers. The Conductor, in the middle of his pirouette, saw the python, took fright, and brought his socked and shoed foot down into the closest large pail of latex - the workers were beside themselves with laughter but did their best to subdue it. One day, the conductor and I were walking along the cart road in a new clearing and, as usual, he was wearing a pith helmet. Suddenly, Hoagy, my fox terrier, charged towards a small compost pile on the side of the road and started barking at a medium sized cobra that had, till that moment, been sunning itself peacefully on the pile, but was now, top half of the body raised and hood open, ready to strike. Emile followed close on the heels of Hoagy and I yelled at them to come back to me. I kept an eye on the snake and the dogs till it lowered its body and slithered away into the cover crop. All this took no more than forty seconds and, still looking towards where the snake had gone, I said to the Conductor something like, 'My word, that was close!' There was no answer, so I looked around and there was no Conductor - and then I saw him; there he was, thirty yards or more down the road, looking my way, helmet in his left hand, his right hand wiping his profusely sweating bald head with a handkerchief!

There was also the matter of the pebbles. At times, when he was amongst workers etc., pebbles would hit the Conductor but, try as he might, he could not catch the culprit because he never saw anyone doing it - until, that is, some months later. Then, he happened to be present at a distance when the culprit was exercising his quite considerable skill at some other person. The skill was the ability to pick up a pebble with his toes and flick it accurately at something or someone whilst in the act of walking with no discernible change in his walk. The boy and, no doubt his parents, would have got a severe berating, but nothing more because, beneath all the bluster, the Conductor was a kind man.

In the past, somehow, the management of Dewalakande had virtually been handed over to the staff. Naturally, on the face of it, all was well and in the hands of the PD, but the HC and the RM of the main factory were the one's who held the power, and even the SDs were treated with condescension, even scorn. From what I saw and experienced, this fostered the attitude that showed itself in the manner in which PDs and SDs were addressed. Addressing the PD as 'Sir' was grudging, if it was used at all. For them SDs did not qualify for this customary courtesy! Even where my Dewalakande Conductor was concerned it took me many months of tact and firmness to win his respect in this regard. After that it was plain sailing with him.

The PD's office was accessed via the clerk's office and, when the PD entered for the first time on any day, no one stood up as was customary elsewhere (not to do so was not only disrespectful but insulting). The current PD was pretty laid back and seemed to be happy to leave things, by and large, as they were. Where

²⁶ Tappers started as soon as it was light enough to see and finished not long after midday because this was the period of maximum latex flow (sap flow).

the SDs were concerned he more or less left us to run our divisions. In the eighteen months or so that he was my PD he went round the fields with me twice - one of those because I had asked him to come and see something. Be that as it may, the SDs had a lot of respect for him and we gave him our fullest loyalty. The SD's would often meet him in his office to talk about work, or if there was no work due to rain, to chat; and often the PD would declare a "public holiday" and we would go to his house for drinks and a swim, or tennis, or both. One day, I was in the office with him when the Troy SD arrived, and in the course of conversation announced that Troy had registered heavy rain the previous night. This surprised us because we were in the middle of a very dry period, but the PD, possible from experience, having once been SD on Troy, asked, 'Did you have a party last night?' The answer was 'Yes.' The fact was that the rain gauge on Troy was in the middle of the front lawn of the SD's bungalow and a guest had urinated into it!

By this time the CTP had embarked on a programme of replanting old and, therefore, low yielding fields. The clearing of the old trees involved four steps: firstly, workers cut the main lateral roots of the trees; secondly, an elephant pushed over the trees; thirdly, the trees were cut and stacked; and fourthly, the stacks were burned when dry. Meanwhile, trees identified as being infected with the Fomes root fungus were marked and all infected material dug out and burned. It was marvellous watching, at close quarters, the intelligent, meticulous and energy efficient manner in which the elephant worked. It was obvious that it took great care to ensure that it would not overbalance, particularly on steep slopes. Each day, soon after noon, its work for the day was stopped and it was taken to the river to bathe.

The tapping panels on a tree were thirty inches high and started just above the union of the graft and the stock. Each panel was half the circumference of the trunk and this created two panels per tree, each being tapped alternately each year to a height of six inches. Thus, each virgin panel was tapped for five years, making a total of ten years on virgin, high yielding, bark. After this ten years, tapping reverted to the first tapped panel which, by then, had enough renewed bark for it to be tapped again. Thereafter, the same order as the tapping of the virgin bark was followed, giving another ten year period after which yet another tapping cycle commenced, with ever declining yields. Ideally, it was then time to replant, but because of WWII and the lean years following it, replanting had been on hold until recently, and this coincided with the completion of the Rubber Research Institute's initial programmes of cloning material for replanting on a large scale. Most of the prior work was done at the Malaysian Rubber Research Institute - the world leader in rubber research. The CTP was replanting about 10% of its rubber each year, and on Dewalakande as a whole that amounted to about 200 acres which, at a stand per acre of 220 amounted to 44,000 plants, a number that required large nurseries. At the time, as in tea, 'new' plantings were planted on the contour with plants closer in the contour lines than between the lines. In time, this grid changed, but not significantly. Previously, the old seedling rubber tress had been planted on a uniform grid giving an initial stand per acre of about 150 which, due to natural attrition and disease, left stands of poorly yielding trees as low as 90 per acre - long overdue for replanting.

Already established in the nurseries on the Dewalakande group were stocks of growing clonal material called "bud wood" from which buds were removed and grafted to stocks grown from seed. When the grafted stock was uprooted for planting out, only plants with single taproots were used and those with two were discarded. My PD gave me some unforgettable advice on how to remember this distinction. He said, 'Its like a woman, she is no good with her legs crossed!'

In January/February each year rubber trees shed their leaves and soon thereafter grow new leaf. This new 'flush', from the stage of earliest budding, is susceptible to the Oidium fungus, and was dusted with Flowers of Sulphur at set intervals until the cuticle of the leaves hardened enough to be impenetrable to the fungus. Dusting tall trees, up to seventy feet in height in some fields, was done by machines, each carried by four men, that blew the dust into and over the trees, a job that had to be started very early in the morning and the work completed before the warmth of the sun created up-currents of air which would dissipate the dust. It was a terrible job as sulphur stings the eyes severely, and goggles and masks were unheard-of in those days.

At one time the machines were breaking down frequently and it was essential that, if this happened, it was fixed immediately. I, therefore, gave instructions that the Assistant Mechanic (who was primarily, though not exclusively, a 'factory worker'), accompany the machines. Perhaps because the machines broke down again that night I discovered that the mechanic had not been in attendance. I was made to understand that the RM had countermanded my instructions so I went to him to verify this and he confirmed it. I said to him, ' Mr.²⁷ Jesudasan, the next time I give instructions make sure that you bloody well carry them out!'

²⁷ Throughout my planting career I used the honourific "Mr." for all my higher-ranking non-executive staff. I felt that using just the surname lacked respect.

Later that morning my PD sent for me and asked me what had happened as the RM had complained to him that I was rude to him and used the word 'bloody'. I explained what had occurred and the PD sent for the RM who came into the office cocky as ever. The PD did not mince words. All he said, with obvious conviction, was, 'Jesudasan, this gentleman here is an executive of the Company and is my second in command. What he tells you to do you will do. Is that clear?' And after a 'Yes, Sir.' from the RM, 'You may go now!'

It was on Dewalakande that I first became conscious of the importance of powers of observation, inherent or cultivated, in planting; that it was necessary, whether walking or motoring, to look at the whole whilst looking for the detail. The trigger for this consciousness was a fungus that caused patches of pink on branches and the fact that I was looking at the total picture of green foliage, trees, ground etc. whilst keeping an eye out for the telltale pink colour.

As in the past, the monthly stock take was a necessary 'evil', but here, when checking the rice stocks, tons of it, I used to get extreme attacks of hay fever, much to the amusement of my PD whose office was on the other side of the wall! No, he was not insensitive, he just had a good sense of humour.

The plantation was well served by roads but on the side of temple hill a section of road needed to be cut to complete the circuit around its 'waist'. The existing road ended at the top, just below the temple, and formed a sharp corner at the 'waist' on the side where the circuit needed to be completed. A new road from this latter point was obviously the best option with the second, and far less satisfactory one, being to cut a much longer road with four or five hairpin bends, from the top. My PD told me that he, and many before him, had tried to find a path around the thing that stymied all attempts to chart a route for this new section. The "thing" was a massive triangular, steep rock face running up the side of the hill from its base to about two thirds of the way up. Undeterred by past failures, and spurred on by the challenge, I asked to be allowed to look for a solution and got wholehearted approval.

Armed with the road tracer I spent many hours over a few days trying various possibilities but, as with all those who had tried before, I was inevitably stymied by the same barrier. However, the answer had been staring all of us in the face - take the first, most direct option and blast an L shaped passage through the rock face. This was my suggestion and, the PD having agreed, in due course I started this work. The earth works were relatively simple as the route was almost level except for the lower end where, to link up with the existing road, a hairpin bend was required and, at this bend, granite retaining walls up to ten feet in height were needed. There was no heavy machinery and all the work was done by the plantation's head stone mason, a man nearing retirement and a genuine craftsman. Mostly on his own, he selected, split, transported (by rolling), lifted and placed (at the right vertical camber) row upon row of granite blocks approximately 24" *w* x 14" *h* x 18" *d*, with the requisite weep holes etc. He easily moved these big blocks along the top of each layer he had laid using two foot-long steel bars, one in each hand - it was fascinating to watch. No mortar was used. By observing this man on this job and the range of other jobs he did, I learned a lot. Some of this knowledge was to come in very useful over two decades later when I was doing landscaping design and construction in Australia and had to manoeuvre large rocks and boulders into the precise position I wanted.

The road was blasted out of the rock face to form a right angle, and this cutting was approximately 10 ft. *w* x 16-20 ft. *h* x 30 ft. *l*. The blasting was done by experienced men brought in from outside and the work involved drill holes (hand drilled) of up to three feet deep into which they sometimes put a stick of dynamite in addition to blasting powder. This work was new to me and absolutely fascinating. Huge chunks of rock, together with a variety of smaller sizes, were blasted out with each explosion and hurled out and down - into villager owned rubber below. By way of compensation all we did was send someone to treat the damaged trees with a standard formulation. There were no complaints.

My dogs, instead of being frightened by the frightful noise of the explosions, charged them. On one of the occasions when multiple charges were laid and lit, as soon as they saw and heard the smoke and hiss of the lit fuses the two of them took off to get amongst it all. I thought I was seeing the end of my animals and yelled at them to come back. Fortunately they did - just before the explosions started - tails wagging and all excited, **they** thought it was great fun!

After the rock was blasted out we were left with a very rough horizontal surface and, to make this suitable for a road, I laid a layer of concrete as the final surface. I also imprinted my initials and the date in the wet concrete just over the edge.

In a new clearing, for the first weeks after replanting, that is until the new plants were sufficiently rooted in the ground to preclude successful translocation, the new plants were susceptible to poaching by outsiders. To counter this, watchmen were on duty at night. During the daytime the regular field watchmen

kept an eye on things. One day I decided to check on the night watchmen and went out after midnight with my two dogs. When we had quietly got to about forty-five feet of the watchman's hut I was concerned that the dogs, particularly the big one, Emile, would go into it and wake up the man if he was asleep, so I bent down to Emile and whispered to him, 'You wait here son, I will be back.' and he promptly dropped down on his belly and waited for me to return. I had never given him such an order before!

When I returned to Dewalakande after getting married my wife and I were surprised to find a big reception awaiting us. There was a large pandal²⁸ across the road in front of the factory gate, and a crowd consisting of the PD and his family, staff and workers. There were speeches and firecrackers and Hindu blessings. The busiest man in all this was a clerk, Mr. Pasupathi Pillai.

Another noteworthy incident occurred one afternoon when I was in the field of the temple. Rain started to pour down in torrents and the workers, as usual, stopped work and left for home. I had to walk a little distance to my motorbike and then ride around the hill and back to the route many of the workers had taken. On my way was a paved dip in the road where water from a small spring in a ravine crossed it. The storm, which was to drop 7" of rain in three hours, had, by the time I arrived at the crossing, created a rush of water about 18" deep across which I could not ride or push my bike. Some workers, anticipating this, had waited for me in the rain and, telling me to remain on the bike, carried me and it across. Also, particularly in hot weather and in the new clearings, if there was work in progress, one of the workers would bring a young coconut and store it in a cool place, for instance under a rock, and produce it for me if I turned up. It was not that there were no clean springs handy; it was an expression of respect and, I suppose, affection. Both these actions involved Sinhalese workers who were usually very loyal on all plantations.

I think that it was on Dewalakande that my penchant for looking for sources of clean water for everyone became apparent. On the side of the hill where the factory, staff quarters and workers quarters were situated there was virtually no surplus spring water, but I managed to get a little surplus from the spring serving the SD's bungalow and pipe that down to the Conductor's house as well as further down.

Early in the 1956 rugby season I was severely concussed during a rugby match and doctors ordered me complete rest for a month in a darkened room, with no talking and no music. After two weeks, however, I was bored and restless and, in any case, wanted to get back to the plantation and at least work from home to whatever extent I could. Meanwhile on Dewalakande one PD had left and another taken over. I, therefore, returned to my bungalow and to a new PD. One day I tested my ability to work by walking a fairly short field road circuit at the top of the hill on which my bungalow was, only to discover that I got very weak and dizzy. Soon after this the new PD unadvisedly took me on a field round in the Land Rover, and some distance by foot, resulting in a setback in my condition, and later in the year I was sent on furlough with an appointment to see a Harley Street specialist in London after my arrival there. In his opinion, not much damage had been done, and he told me to go to Europe as planned but to go slow on the red wine! Actually, I did find that wine was a good indicator of my medical condition because, later, headaches would occur with minimal consumption at first, and later at higher levels as time passed. During the next seven years I used to sometimes black out and collapse at night after only a few drinks during the evening, and at the end of that period found that after a rugby match I had blank patches in my memory. It was then that I decided that I could opt for more rugby and risk losing my job, or give up rugby and assure my job. I chose the latter.

The new PD was very efficient and capable though not very likeable, and wasted no time in asserting his authority with the staff. He obviously noticed the fact that the clerks did not do the done thing on his entry into their office and must have hinted at something because, but for Mr. Pillai, all either stood or made a reluctant effort to lift their buttocks off their chairs. As for Mr. Pillai, one day the PD stopped by his chair and said, 'Pillai, the next time I come in here and you don't stand I will take away your chair and you will work standing!' That got the result he wanted.

We once went to the Rubber Research Institute and one of the things that impressed me was the work being done with cell culture where they were in the early stages of growing clonal material from cells - from the terminal buds of shoots I think.

By this time the exodus of our ex-patriot SDs had started, and with it the rapid movement of the rest up the ladder. I went on six months furlough which lasted seven months because of the Suez crisis.

²⁸ A two or three-dimensional decorated structure, usually in timber or bamboo, often spanning a road or entrance.

HOLYROOD (WEST HOLYROOD)²⁹

(West Holyrood Div. c.487 acres)

Category - High Grown
(1957/1960)



The West Holyrood bungalow in 1957.

Holyrood (approx. 1035 acres) at an elevation of about 4500', comprised 3 divisions viz. East Holyrood, West Holyrood and the small Rathnilakelle. The SD ran West Holyrood and the PD the other two with two Conductors. There were two significant differences between East and West Holyrood viz. the work force and the standard of work and, therefore, the condition of the tea. The East workforce was extremely undisciplined and aggressive, and the work of a very low standard in all respects. West Holyrood, possibly about 400 acres, was the opposite. It was previously a separate plantation and was divided into two divisions, Upper and Lower. Each of these had its own muster ground, workers and workers quarters. They also had their own supervisory staff.

The factory, situated on East Holyrood, was a magnificent affair with five floors (called lofts) above the ground floor. It had recently been re-clad and re-roofed in corrugated aluminium sheet. About two years after the re-cladding, it was noticed that the new sheets, particularly on the roof were crumbling in patches around the bolts. The cause was diagnosed to be electrolysis due to ferrous bolts being used on aluminium. The engineering firm which did the re-cladding was required to re-do it all, and did. That is when I learned that electrolysis occurs when aluminium and iron are in contact in the presence of water, and corrosion is the result. Also, during my stint, the Government put a huge power line through Holyrood (with a massive pylon in the middle of my vegetable garden) and the factory was electrified. All shafting, pulleys and belts were replaced by individual electric motors for each machine. Some time thereafter new, Government, safety regulations were brought in which required that every moving part in all factories had to be enclosed in weld-mesh or expanded metal guards. Some of these were put in a foot from the floor, but when inspectors visited, they said that that was not enough. They required the gap to be seven inches stating that the work had to be done in such a way that even a fool trying to get too close to the moving parts just could not do so! Such was the safety standard required. Holyrood was the pinnacle of PD appointments in the CTP and it was

²⁹ During this period I went to Forres for six months to "act" (A temporary fill-in appointment). For convenience I have lumped together the two periods on Holyrood.

the same for the Teamakers. The TM was an arrogant man with the same attitudinal problems as those on Dewalakande but fortunately (for him?) I had next to nothing to do with him.

The SD had a BSA 125 cc for fieldwork. I used this once to play a prank on the passengers in the train that passed through the plantation. While passing through the general area of Holyrood, the railway climbs steeply (from about 4500 ft. to 6000 ft.) zigzagging up the mountain range. It intersects West Holyrood four times, once through a tunnel, at one stage doubling back on itself in almost a circle to within a matter of about thirty feet of itself, although, to the passengers it appears that they are travelling in a straight line most of the time. Twiggling this I once went to the topmost railway cutting when a train was on its way down and stood on top of the bank. Some passengers observed me. As soon as the train passed, I ran to my bike and rode down to a second point and stood there, bike out of sight, as the train went by. The passengers who had seen me before looked surprised to see this same guy so far from where they had last seen him. I repeated this lower down, where we had a level crossing, and the passengers who had seen me twice before were obviously completely perplexed!

My staff always got my full support and I would not countenance any unjustified disobedience of their instructions or any disrespect towards them. On West I had two excellent Head KPs who supported me wholeheartedly.

Not very long after I came to West Holyrood some workers came to me and told me that one of their family had, a few hours before, slipped into the river below the Lower Division and had not surfaced. I told them to wait for me and went into the house to put on my swimming costume and get my goggles and flippers³⁰. We went to the river and they showed me pool into which the man had fallen. It was a 30 ft. diameter oval dish shaped pool with a 3-4 ft. waterfall at the top end and a fairly big one just past the lower end. Although the river was relatively low, there was too much flow into the pool and, as far as my safety was concerned, too much going over the bottom end. I, therefore, got some of the onlookers to move small rocks around to divert the water away from the pool. This done I ventured forth into the murky water with my heart in my mouth because of what I may see or touch - it was not a good feeling! All I found was a gutter like groove running the full length of the pool. This was about two feet wide and two feet or more deep and full of sludge so I was not going to do too much poking around in there. In case the body was stuck under the now small waterfall at the top end I called for a bamboo, which I jammed in the groove and against the rock behind the waterfall and, holding this, groped around at the bottom without success. Throughout my time in the water I had a horrible mental picture of a face with bulging eyes staring at me through the murk just in front of my face. Eventually it all got too much for me and I gracefully ceased my endeavours. By this time there were hundreds of onlookers on the hillsides on both sides of the river. As was to be expected, twenty-four hours from the time the man fell in, his body floated to the surface in the pool. Where it had been I have no idea.

As was the case elsewhere in the CTP many new lines were being built and I had learned somewhere that to test that the correct mixture of cement and sand was used all one needed to do was put the mixture in a bottle of water, shake it and let it stand. The mixture settled according to the specific gravity of the constituents in clearly differentiated bands and an accurate assessment of the ratio of the mix could, thus, be obtained. I used also, with the flat of my feet, kick the walls of the buildings being built to check their strength, and to make sure that the concrete floors were laid to the correct depth I would visit very soon after the pour and dig to check the depth. This may seem like over kill but I only did it often enough for the builders to be aware that I was liable to come at any time and check their work in these ways.

On West Holyrood I set about doing my own selection of tea clones for propagation and went through the process of scouring the whole division for suitable "mother" bushes from which to start the long process of selection. Before moving on to my next posting I got to the stage of planting a few early selections in the ground for further testing. Also, it was here that I came up with a theory which I was able to put into practice. From being a cutting to the time of being ready to be planted in the field, a tea plant took, according existing practice, two to three years depending on what other practices were carried out on the young plant (there were a lot of differing practices and trials in progress at the TRI as well as by many PDs). I reached the conclusion that it was possible, better for the plant in the longer term, and highly cost efficient, to transfer cuttings to the field when their roots were still at the nodule stage, just when the nodules were ready to develop into roots. I was aware that consideration had to be given to the pros and cons of this relative to large-scale application, but first things first. In a ravine which I had reclaimed just below the bungalow, were some VPs I had planted as mother bushes of the future and in this ravine I put my theory into practice. As I had expected, the plants grew just as well as any that were fully developed in the nursery. I

³⁰ I had been a swimmer, surf lifesaver and surfer prior to starting planting.

had also theorised that, because of less shock and disturbance at the time of planting, such plants would overtake in growth plants much bigger at that time. My transfer to Dewalakande concluded this experiment.

Most of the West Holyrood tea was high jat; even what was not the 'best' was good. Therefore, backed by a good work force it had great potential in regard to yield and, during one high cropping season one year, the younger (from pruning) fields in particular were a sight to behold. The bushes on Holyrood as a whole were good, but on West they were best, and formed a full cover which, in full flush was a continuous cover of bright yellow/green. In one month in that year we easily surpassed the previous best harvest for one day. On Lower Division this was 38,000 lbs. The enthusiasm and pride of all the pluckers, kanganies and staff was wonderful. But it was not just the one day - I cannot remember the details but this was certainly not a flash in the pan, or achieved by stripping off every available flush for the sake of a record. It was the natural consequence of sustained good, selective plucking during every round. Other years, if not as good, were not far behind.

Fertilizer sacks were an abundant item on plantations, and we used to sell them to sack dealers for say 30° each, credit the accounts with say 10° and use the difference for special things on the plantation. On West I decided to use some of it to buy monthly prizes for the best male and female pluckers on both my divisions - a shirt for the men and a sari for the women. This was very well received by the workers.

There was one year when the PD was in a race with the PD on Tangakelle to see which one would get the highest yield for that year, and during the last days they were running neck and neck. My PD set his workers to plucking everything they possibly could off the bushes. He used to come over to West and urge my workers to do the same but, while the kanganies would agree with him and promise to do so, as soon as he had gone they retracted what they had said. It was similar in the pruning fields. The PD would come around doing this and that with a pruning knife and demonstrating to the pruners what he wanted done, and the pruning kangany would repeat the instructions to the pruners - who probably took no notice anyway, after all they were the real experts up to the point of science - and after the boss had gone say, 'Now do what the Sinna Dorai has told us.'³¹ This despite my insisting on the pruning cuts forming a good level etc. - good pruning in fact. The East pruning was so bad that the bushes could be described as hacked, and years of this, results in a fall off in yield.

My PD was a nice enough man but he was mortally afraid of his workers, particularly the East workers. He even called them by the term of endearment "Thambi" (Little Brother), a course of action that on a plantation at that time fostered not respect but disrespect. It was not possible to effectively manage five workers this way let alone about three thousand which would have been Holyrood's worker force excluding dependents. The poor chap had no control and, if nothing else, this put me in danger when I had to stand in for him in his absence. Mr. Masfield is quoted as saying, 'We retire PDs at age 55 because the damage they would do in the ten years to 65 would take thirty years to put right' (or words to that effect!).

One evening, well after dark, my PD (about 52 years old) phoned me and said, 'One of my Thalaivars is here and will not leave.' I (about 23 years old) said, 'Where is he Sir?' 'Here, in my sitting room!', 'Tell him to clear off, Sir!', 'Yes, I will tell him to f--- off!'. Twenty minutes later my phone rings, 'I told him but he is still here.' I did give him advice but I cannot remember what but the Thalaivar left.

One day I had to do my PD's labour day. When I arrived at his office I was astonished to see sixty to a hundred workers, mostly men, hanging around outside (I use to get about ten at most). On being asked, the HC told me that most of them were just there till knock off time, to avoid work. I told the HC to tell them, from me, that those who had no valid reason to stay were to push off, as I would not see anyone until they did. Eventually, whatever I said they must have done, because I did not walk out of the office and leave them. On my divisions, past and present, those coming to see me had to bring a chit from a KP or the Conductor so that I knew that the KP or the Conductor knew who was off work to see me. There was no question of a worker having to get permission to see me - my staff always knew that everyone had the right to see me about anything.

Once, I had found some shocking pruning along one row in a West Upper division field and told the culprit to go home and that he would not be paid for the day. Someone else was detailed to correct the bad work. The pruners stopped work and, through the Kangany, asked that the man be pardoned. When I refused they said that they would walk out if I did not pardon the man and I told them that the answer was no, and that was all. They all left the field and so did I. There was no row.

As it was then noon I set off for home and was about to enter my back garden when my PD's car came belting down the road from Upper division and the conversation went like this: excited 'Your pruners

³¹ This used to happen in the plucking fields as well.

have walked out!" 'Yes, I know, Sir.' *'But the whole division might walk out!'* 'That does not worry me!' *'Well it bloody well worries me!'* - and off he went, home. I did nothing, no one else walked out and the pruners were back at work the next day!

Once, when I returned after being away for a few days I was told that my workers on West Lower division had gone on strike for one day. They got a good telling off from me, not for striking, but for doing so when I was away. They were duly repentant.

Up to now the S.W. monsoon arrived, almost to the day, on the 1st. of May each year and persisted non-stop for three months - three months of gloomy, cloudy, misty weather with continuous rain or drizzle. From this time, however, the monsoon arrived later and later each year, until it arrived as late as August. Understandably, in the conditions brought by this monsoon, workers became somewhat tetchy.

On one payday, because the PD was to be away, arrangements were made for me to pay the East workers. Their pay was organised in a big shed about 30 ft. x 30 ft with a table and a chair in the middle one at it's side for the checkroll clerk, and the staff assisting with the pay standing by. One could feel the anticipation! There was no doubt that there was going to be a test of wills. The hundreds there would have heard from my workers what I was like and I knew what these workers were like but I was not spoiling for a fight. I knew that what I had to do was to get the pay paid efficiently and as quickly as possible and that what they had to do was what I wanted in order to achieve that goal. There was no purpose served in trying to figure out what could or would happen - that had to be dealt with as it happened, if it happened. So far, I had barely taken any notice of all those in front of me (a tactic).

The cash was handed over by the contractor; I left the bags unopened on the table and looked up at the crowd. I told the Conductor what I wanted of them in regard how to come up when called, making room for others, complaints etc. and told him to tell them that. I did not speak to them (tactic). I then opened the bags, laid out the cash on the table as I wanted it and looked up to signal that I was ready. I must say that, as far as I can remember, they were remarkably quiet. It was then that I got the feeling that something was wrong; and that what was wrong was behind me to my left - so I looked there, and what did I see? - and what had all those out there been seeing all this while? Sitting cockily on a large storage box, with his feet up on the box, was a young buck, very proud of himself! Saying nothing, and in no hurry, I just stared at him: first the smug expression on his face started to melt, then his feet moved forward a bit, then his feet went over the edge and down, and then he slowly slid forward, got off the box, and walked slowly out of the shed.

Looking forward again I noticed that there was no passageway for those who were called to come up for their pay, so I told them to move back and create a passageway and the two or three watchmen who were there started hurrying the workers up by holding their long handled hand axes horizontally with both hands and pushing a little. As this was far too slow, I shouted. 'Chop their toes off!' and the watchmen made a show of doing that with the desired effect. I then turned towards the pay team and said, 'Lets start.' and it all went smoothly.

Early one morning the East Conductor arrived at my bungalow on his motorcycle to tell me that there was trouble on East; that some members of the spraying gang belonging to the DWC union were refusing to allow the others, members of the CWC, to take out their spraying equipment³². I told him to go back and that I would follow in a few minutes. For some reason I went by my car instead of by bike. The fracas was at the back of the factory near the tool sheds about 100 ft. from the factory rear door.

I went to the Factory office to get the full story from the Conductor. I knew that the PD was away on a VA visit quite far away. The story was that there was a long-standing, unresolved dispute between the two unions over how many of each union should make up the spraying gang (If my workers anywhere came up with this sort of idea they would have been told, in no uncertain terms, that labour was not allocated on the basis of union membership). On the day before there had been another meeting with the PD and, the matter remaining unresolved, the PD had told them to wait till he came back in a couple of days. That morning when, on his way out, he had been apprised of what was happening, and had apparently said, rather grandly, 'Tell them to do as I said yesterday. Drive on driver.' And left it to the poor Conductor to sort out. I know that, had he not been leaving, the PD would never have made such a hopeless reply. Anyway, I sent for the Talaivar of the DWC and explained to him that the situation was quite simple; his men were breaking the law by denying workers the lawful right to work and that I could not allow that. I told him that the PD would be back in two days time and that, meanwhile, they should abide by what the PD had said. There were a couple of DWC committee members present too and they were on the verge of agreeing to what I said when a young hothead crashed the party and asked them what they were about. When they told him what they

³² I could be wrong about what union did what.

intended doing he refused to allow them to do it and they changed their minds. As far as I was concerned, I had to uphold the right of those who wanted to work to do so. I got up and went towards the spraying equipment shed. It had double doors extending across the entire front wall. One of these was open but there was a double line of DWC men blocking it. I told the willing workers to follow me and walked straight at the phalanx which parted and let me as well as the willing workers in. However, when inside, the trouble broke out. The DWC fellows were accusing the others of pinching their equipment and trying to force the equipment out of their hands, and I was saying that the equipment was the property of the company. We ended up outside, with serious trouble developing. By this time a crowd had gathered, was getting heated and getting bigger by the minute. In the middle of the melee were the Conductor and I when one youngish man got between me and the Conductor, got the latter by the front of his shirt, and was about to punch his face. In turn, I grabbed the man by the seat of his pants and the back of his collar and heaved him over the heads of a few and he disappeared from view! After this I saw a very angry man in the crowd armed with a yard log of firewood shouting at me, 'If you touch another person I will kill you!' The Conductor said to me quietly, 'You had better get out of here, Sir, they will kill you'. It was time to go, so I put my hands and arms together straight out in front of me, said, 'Get out of my way!' and walked, the crowd parting before me. I think I did not breathe until I was inside the factory door some one hundred yards away. Meanwhile, all the workers of East Holyrood were coming down from work in support of one group or the other, or out of curiosity.

To be on the safe side I went to the police station in town in my car and told the duty sergeant that if anyone brought a charge of assault against me, to let me know as I would make a charge myself. He looked at me and said meaningfully, 'No one will make a charge against you.'

I then drove back to Holyrood, heading for the main road route to the PD's office when a KP, who was running towards my car, stopped me and said, 'Whatever you do don't go via the factory road, they will kill you!' I thanked him and told him that I was not going via the factory. At the office, I phoned the DWC office and spoke to the District Representative. I told him what his members had done and told him that I wanted him in the plantation office within half an hour. He said that he had only come in to work a little while before having got wet in some rain and that his trousers were hanging up to dry, to which my response was that I was not concerned about his trousers, and that, with or without his trousers, I wanted him in the office within half an hour. He arrived within half an hour and, having briefed him, I told him that, provided everyone was back at work within a period of time I specified (I cannot remember what it was), I would pay them for the full day. He went away, and soon after, everyone was going back to work. I then phoned the PD and told him as briefly as possible what had occurred and that everything was under control. He panicked, and insisted on returning even though he had not finished his VA's visit, and despite my repeating that it was not necessary. That was a Friday, and he returned that night. On Saturday he phoned me to tell me that he had arranged a meeting with the unions on the Sunday morning and asked if I could come. The trouble was over on Friday morning, so I could see no reason for this unbecoming haste and said that I had planned to go to the club for tennis on the Sunday morning. However, I relented and told him that I would be there.

On Sunday we sat around his desk in his office and I kept out of things as he was the boss. I only came in to make a salient point here and there which was usually not pandering to the union point of view and found that he was nudging me under the table, signalling me not to upset them! I cannot remember the result of the meeting.

At some time before or after this fracas the Conductor of East was severely assaulted by some of his workers. Thinking that he was dead they started to shove him into a culvert under the road, but he was not dead, only feigning unconsciousness and, at an opportune moment, he lashed out, freed himself and somehow got away.

Although staying at home instead of going out to the field was frowned upon for obvious reasons we all did it now and again at the risk of getting punished. During a test match overseas somewhere I decided to take the risk and stay in one afternoon to listen to the commentary on radio. When the phone rang I answered it and it was my PD. Having finished the purpose of his call he must have asked me what I was doing and I told him. He said, 'Oh, good! Would you keep me posted?'

It appeared at one time that someone had taken a dislike to me and placed some harmful charms just under the surface of the footpath I used from my bungalow to the Lower division muster ground. Someone discovered them and I had one man come to the bungalow insisting that he apply lard on the soles of my field shoes to negate the evil forces. He, amongst others, was very concerned - more, I think, about the act than its potential. I was not particularly concerned and nothing further happened.

It was in 1957 that we in the CTP started to prune tea on the slope - that is pruning each bush so that a line drawn along the tips of the top pruning cuts on a bush, provided that the bush was properly and evenly pruned, ran parallel to the general slope of the ground below. The old method was called table pruning for

the simple reason that each bush was pruned on the horizontal, like a table. Pruning on the slope had a lot of advantages which I do not intend to go into here but, being a new way of pruning it was necessary that we, the PD and I, demonstrate to the pruners what was required. For the purposes of the demonstration and to aid the pruners for the first few days at least, we supplied long, slender, firm sticks that could be laid on the bush, or in the bush, and from one bush to the next, to indicate a continuous and even slope. They were quick on the uptake despite decades of doing it the old way, and the next task was to train the specialised "tipping" pluckers - tippers as they were called - when the new, post-pruning shoots had grown high enough to be "tipped" - the process by which the post pruning plucking level was established. This training was easily accomplished as the tippers were capable, willing and able workers. To assist them, I spent a lot of time with the tipping gang in the first few days at least.

During the second part of my time on Holyrood the permanent PD went to Scrubs to act for the General Manager and an acting PD arrived. In terms of labour management this man was the opposite of the permanent one but, being temporary, was, I think, reserved in the application of his usual standards in respect of discipline and work. This PD was also rather strict with his SDs, but he had a huge sense of humour - particularly outside work. He also had a very heavy hand when pouring drinks and it was almost fatal to accept his invitations to "a drink" after a field round. During his stay we had a visit from Mr. Masefield and, as was customary during visits of members of the London Board, the SD (or SDs) was invited to drinks and dinner. At this time Mr. Masefield was over eighty and showed characteristics common at that age; characteristics which were a fine counter-point to the respect which we had for him. The subtle facial expressions of the PD, and I think his wife, with reference to the 'old man' were mischievous but added humour to the evening. In preparation for the visit of the Chairman we went through the usual ritual of titivation, and in due course, the PD and the Chairman went round the plantation mainly by car. After the visit, the PD told me that Mr Masefield had commenced his Report on Holyrood with the words "I proceeded to go round the fields with Mr. x and his Assistant Mr y." This was incorrect because I did not accompany them, and I do not think that SDs ever did. I think this was Mr. Masefield's last visit to Ceylon. He must have retired soon after. When he did, he was replaced by Mr. Francis Henstock who had been a CTP SD and PD, the General Manager, and then a Director in London. Hence, for a very long time the company was in the hands of men with hands on experience.

The appeal that the creation of new cart roads held for me was satisfied by a long one I cut from the main road down and then across the slope of field No. 9, facing Talawakelle estate.

The garage for the West bungalow was down a flight of some twenty or thirty steps from the edge of the garden drive to the road below - most inconvenient. At the rear of the bungalow was a small rear wing of two rooms that were used for the storage and maintenance of field spraying equipment. This meant the movement of people in and out of the rear compound of the house at all times of the day - most unsatisfactory. With permission, I move the spraying equipment and other things to space created in the sheds at the muster ground, cut a vehicle entrance through a bank between the driveway and the rear compound, converted the end room into an office, removed one wall of the remaining room and turned the room into a garage. Outside the rear window of the office, I erected a small roof as some protection from the elements for those speaking to me there. Hitherto, the SD had no office and his labour days etc. were conducted in the hurly-burly of the muster shed on each division.

Some time after the permanent PD had returned I heard about various things the workers on the Upper division had obtained from him about which I knew nothing. This was odd because I had specifically requested him not to see any of my workers without a note from me and had assured him that I would never prevent any worker of mine from seeing him. I discovered that it was the Upper Division Thalaivar who had decided, correctly, that he could get more from the PD than from me and, hence, gone behind my back to the PD. I decided on psychological warfare on the workers of this division.

It was always my habit to chat to my workers, have a little joke, perhaps a little tease or enquire about a problem in the family - nothing major, just a little chinwag - particularly to the 'old ladies' amongst the pluckers when the pluckers were lined up in the evening, picking over their leaf, whilst waiting to have their leaf weighed. I stopped this. I did not talk unless it was in connection with work, and then, via a kangany. One day I heard a plucker whisper to another as I was moving away, 'He is not talking to us any more!' and realised that my strategy was working. When the Thalaivar or workers came to see me on labour days I would tell them, 'You are the ones who went to the PD direct; you wanted my office closed, so don't come here, go to the PD.' and refused to have anything to do with them. I did not act angrily or yell at them - although I did throw the book at the Thalaivar once when he got bolshie, and it hit one of the window bars instead of his face. This was the book in which workers' requests etc. were conveyed to management and in which management replied - I cannot recall what it was called - a book that I saw, or used, hardly ever, if at all, in my seventeen years of planting.

My unfriendliness went on for a couple of months or more, even after I had been advised that I was moving to Forres to act for six months. Then, the Thalaivar came to my office one day, a few days before my departure on the coming Monday, and said that the Upper division workers wanted to come and say goodbye on the Sunday and that, if I insisted on not seeing them, they would go on strike on that day³³ and come anyway. I could not but acquiesce.

I cannot remember how it was arranged in relation to work but at a time pre-arranged with me by my staff I went out to the rear compound of my bungalow and there were hundreds of workers and staff there, all dressed up, and a chair set out for me. As I stood in front of the chair people came forward, the women, mainly, falling at my feet in respect or devotion and wanting to kiss my feet. Not desiring this adulation, I tried to shuffle backwards, requesting them to desist. I was deeply moved by all this - moved to tears. Someone made a speech, which hardly penetrated my brain, and then it was my turn but, knowing that I would be incapable of speech even at a simple, unemotional, event, I had written down a short speech which I gave to a KP to read out for me at this highly emotional one.

³³ A Sunday with pay at time and a half.

FORRES

(323 acres)

Category - High grown

1958



Forres Managers' Bungalow c.1958.

This was an "acting" appointment, or an "Act" as it was commonly called. One "acted" or was "acting" and, almost always, acts were given to SDs on the verge of becoming a PD. At times, however, an SD had to be appointed as a PD without previously acting. In either case, these initiate PDs were "over-looked" by the nearest company PD or, where one such was not conveniently close, presumably an outsider was appointed. Over-looking PDs were paid extra for this.

From the inception of my career, a thirst for knowledge made me spend a lot of time on social occasions picking the brains of senior planters and arguing points with them.

My over-looking PD was in his mid to late thirties and reasonably senior in the Company. Immediately after my arrival on Forres he came over for a chat and said to me, 'You know more about this business that I do so I will leave you to it. If there is anything you want signed send it over to me.' Well! This certainly surprised me, but it also suited me perfectly.

When taking over or handing over, a procedure that took two to three days, the incoming person did a complete stock take, from tools to rice to tea to PD's bungalow furniture and cash in the office safe. The remaining time was spent in the field, office and factory for the familiarization of the newcomer with matters relevant to the plantation.

Somewhere along the line since I started planting I had come to the realisation, through unconscious self-analysis and self-observation, that I set my own standards, and that these standards were higher than those expected of me by my employer and my supervisors. This was no burden to me; in fact, it is possible that it made things easy for me.

Forres was a good, compact plantation with a very nice bungalow and garden, a tiny swimming pool, a car and a driver. The office was not separate, but in the factory. The story regarding the pool was that the PD who built it (c. 1948) got into serious trouble for doing so - no doubt due to Mr. Masfield's unwarranted bias against swimming pools. Comprising the senior staff were, the Head Clerk plus two clerks in the office,

the Teamaker and an assistant in the factory, and a Conductor in the field. The workforce numbered about 525.



Forres Managers' Bungalow c.1958.

The usual daily schedule of a PD was a field round, which could include the factory, in the morning from 7.30 to noon or a little after, and office work from 1.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. This latter could include a factory visit if it had not been done in the morning, or the visit could be after the office closed. I soon found that there was insufficient work on Forres to occupy the day unless, of course, one felt morally compelled to spend the full day working. My conclusion was that the main, and only, criterion was that a plantation ran well and efficiently, to the highest achievable standard, in all respects. As was my wont, I insisted on, and got, a high standard of work by disciplining as well as nurturing and teaching my workers and staff. I did not, however, call for the perfection as demonstrated with the dapap lopping on Carlabeck. I also realised that too much of a PD's presence in any one section was liable to stress all those in the section, as well as to undermine the authority and responsibilities of the supervisory staff. In fact, when I had visitors staying for a day or more I spent my time with them without compunction, even dictating letters to my clerk over the phone and having sent to the bungalow anything needing my signature. Needless to say, however, I was available in the event of anything happening that required my attention. Apart from all that I had a policy that any place on my plantation could be visited by me at any time, day or night - to me, unpredictability was a key factor in achieving efficiency all round. After I had left Forres after my second stint I was told by a Forres worker who visited me on Radella that the then Forres PD was disconcerting the workers by his constant presence in the field, and that they were unhappy.

The majority of the plantation was relatively flat below a backdrop of three fields on a steep mountain face. The tea was of medium jat but was yielding well and had potential. Unusually, it was the high slopes that were the highest yielding, possibly due to better jat but I cannot remember.

Here was my first exposure, in the office, to accounts and estimates, and in the factory, manufacture and the 'Factory Diary', the book detailing the daily activities and results in the factory. I was impressed by system of accounting based on Cost Of Production (or COP) per pound of tea manufactured. Every item of expenditure listed in the accounts, and duplicated in the annual estimates (budget), some 130 under revenue expenditure and 25 under capital expenditure, was defined as COP/lb. For me, who disliked accounts strongly and abhorred the necessity of checking the monthly accounts and signing for dozens of things each month, the system was very helpful in monitoring expenditure against estimate with reference to all items.

The Act was uneventful except for it being an excellent learning experience and, having completed it, I returned to Holyrood as SD until I moved to Ingoya.



Ian at the Forres swimming pool c.1958.

INGOYA

1960/61

(1213 acres Rubber)

(Acting Manager 4 or 6 months)

The name Ingoya is derived from the Sinhala words Ing (a name) + Oya, meaning small river or stream. This river ran along the northern boundary of the plantation.

The David Lean film *The Bridge On The River Kwai* was filmed, in the main, on the Kelani Ganga³⁴ but some of the massacre scenes were filmed on the Ing Oya. Also, the PD at the time was a young man with tousled blonde hair and the physical attributes akin to those of a prisoner of war. As a result of this, the filmmakers invited him to participate as an extra in the film. The Company having granted him permission he did so, earning his salary as well as the pay of a film extra!

In total, Ingoya was about 1500 acres of rubber of which 300-500 acres at the highest elevations had been abandoned except for some tapping, which was being done until the remaining resources were exhausted. This area had been deemed too high in elevation to be productive - the maximum elevation considered suitable for rubber being 1000 ft. above sea level. For the plantation as a whole high rainfall was a negative factor as the Ingoya average per annum was 100 inches. Too much rainfall, or more correctly, too many wet days adversely affect tapping, and hence yield, because if the tapping panels on the trees were wet the latex ran down the side of the cut and was wasted; furthermore the damp helped the penetration of parasitic fungi into the tree. The plantation started a few hundred yards from the main road near Kitulgala, at an elevation of about 300 ft. and ascended to about 1500 ft. The PD's bungalow, five miles by road from the gate, was one of the many post war ones built by the Company and was almost at the top of the plantation, with commanding views to the north and west, the former over lower elevation mountains and valleys, and the latter down the Kelani river valley almost to the sea. For some reason the rear of the bungalow faced the western views and the front a hillside. Early one morning, the entire valley to the west was full to the top with cloud as a result of an inversion layer. It was like a flat, dense blanket of cotton wool and, as I watched, a small but dense wisp of cloud rose from the middle as if a giant hand had grasped a little wool with two fingers and tweaked it upwards. A couple of minutes later, the whole blanket started to rise and disperse in the morning sun. It was surreal. However, these views were no compensation for the hot and steamy conditions and the millions of mosquitoes which used to arrive at the bungalow in dense waves almost exactly just after 4 p.m. every day. These were the small ones with itchy bites, and they were followed later by similar waves of half inch sized ones who stayed the night.

Up to some time in the late nineteen forties there was an SD on Ingoya but this post was abolished and the bungalow demolished.

The factory was a few hundred yards below the PD's bungalow, about a kilometre by road, as were the clerical and factory staff bungalows and the office was at the side of the bungalow adjoining the garage positioned at the side of the front lawn. The land up to the PD's bungalow was steep and there were two roads up to it. The original one, most probably the old horse track widened, ran straight up the hill and was so steep that it was said that the only way that PDs of old could get their cars up it was to come up in reverse gear (presumably when returning too!). Not too long before 1960 however, someone had cut a road at a lesser gradient well below and past the side of the bungalow where it turned on itself and continued up to the garage apron adjacent to the front lawn. The point of describing all this is that, by the time the clerks walked up to the office, by either road, they were so hot and sticky that work was difficult, if not impossible, for some time. They had asked my predecessor whether they could be driven to and from the office in the company car and had, understandably, been granted their request.

One of the things I had to do on Ingoya was to write a report on its viability for the Board, via GS & Co. who would have recently taken over the administration of the CTP plantations. The report was to assist the Board in deciding whether to sell the place. The report had to take into account the other minor crops being grown, as well as the advisability of continuing manufacture on site because of the high rainfall, and attendant high humidity, and the problems that that caused with the drying of the rubber "laces". Because of long drying times these laces attracted mildew with a consequent downgrading of quality and, therefore, price. The minor crops were citronella grass from which oil was extracted (a few acres under power lines), pepper vines and nutmeg trees.

³⁴ Kelani River. Ganga is Sinhala for river.

This being another "Act" for me I was overlooked from Dewalakande, some forty-five minutes away, by my last PD on Dewalakande who was, by then, becoming quite an authority on rubber and, because of the prominence of Dewalakande amongst rubber plantations, at least in its wider region, getting VAing too.

Ingoya was an isolated plantation - **miles** from anywhere even after the five miles to the gate. Perhaps, because of this it had developed a sort of "island" culture. The departing PD was of retirement age and was departing for good³⁵. He was a very kind-hearted man and this, together with the isolation and the ten years he had been on Ingoya, seemed to have resulted in the many things that were going on, many with that PD's permission, that just could not be condoned for various reasons, unless the place was a non-profit, benevolent institution. An example in the field was a gang of twenty or twenty-five senior men, of whom many were nearing the pensionable age of sixty-five, who formed the road maintenance detail and appeared to me to be malingering most of the time. One day I discovered that they were not at work during the afternoon and, on enquiring as to the reason, was informed that because of their age they had been given permission to go home after the mornings work was done. I asked whether they were paid half a day's wage and was told that they were paid for the full day. I revoked that concession. After that and the general tightening up that I did, which I cannot now recall and which I think, therefore, was not particularly serious, the Thalaivar, or Thalaivars, came to me and complained about the changes I was making. I explained to them that the CTP was seriously thinking of selling Ingoya and that I had come to assess whether this should be done. I also impressed upon them the truth that, if it were to be sold, some cheapskate native person would buy it and they knew what that would mean for them - they did. I had no overt trouble from anyone after that but I did carry a cricket wicket in the car with me just in case, and because those five miles to the bungalow were a very lonely five miles at night.

Part of the workforce was Sinhalese from neighbouring villages, and these formed a significant part of one of the weeding gangs. In this gang was a slim and attractive "village maiden" who, perhaps unwittingly, gained my attention by constantly gazing at me. Over time, I had heard tales of village girls having affairs with PDs and SDs and, after a while, the one-eyed snake got the better of my mind. As a result, one afternoon when the weeders were weeding the borders of my bungalow garden, I went over to them and told the girl to go and weed the flower bed by a window. This was my bedroom window the curtains of which I had drawn closed. I went into the bungalow and to the bedroom and invited the fair maiden in through the window. Much to my alarm and embarrassment she bolted across the lawn to the safety of the other women and I, metaphorically speaking, bolted the other way! I was concerned about embarrassment, not trouble. However, anticipating the possibility of trouble, I picked up my gun box, went to the office, and told the HC that I was going off to get my gun license renewed. These were being renewed at the time. I did not return till late at night and not a word was heard nor a sign seen in regard to my stupidity.

The following incidents would have been funny if they had not been important even though, from a broader viewpoint, I could not help but be amused, though I did not show it.

The factory RM was a quaint character for whom the interaction of quality manufacture and worker discipline had long since lost its definition. Going round the factory one day I was walking past the men sorting sheets of white rubber and looking for blemishes that would consign the sheets to a lower grade, when I noticed red spots on some sheets. Looking further, I noticed that the window sills next to the sorters were splashed with months, or years, of beetle spit. These workers were in the entrenched habit of chewing beetle nut whilst sorting white rubber. I was astounded and made this known to the RM. I told him that this was to cease forthwith but said nothing to the workers as they were not to blame. Some days later, as I came in through the front door of the factory, I noticed, on the further side of the factory, a worker on a chair, inside the factory, having his hair cut by the resident barber. This, in a factory supposed to be making pure white rubber! This time I did not say anything to anyone; I just stood where I was near the door and stared - and in a few seconds both barber and client were gone.

The only phone in the office was on the PD's desk, a most inconvenient arrangement for all concerned and, one day, the HC, a gentle and courteous man, was talking on the phone to someone. I was looking down doing something at my desk when I got the feeling that something was not quite right. I looked at the HC and noticed that he was hunching over a little and had the ear end of the handset pointing down and not at his ear. This was a mystery to me and I thought 'Ingoya is certainly a place of odd occurrences!' Later I diplomatically asked the HC about his phone style and he said that he was deaf, and that the receiver of his hearing aid was in his shirt! Whilst on the subject of the phone, I heard the HC talking to the RM one

³⁵ On most Wednesdays he did go to the Kotmale Club - quite a way away.

day. It transpired that a shipment of rubber was due to leave the factory that day but that the RM had no labels to tie on the bales. As it would take days to re-order and receive labels I asked for the phone and asked the RM to repeat to me his problem. I told him off for allowing his stock of labels to run out and asked him how it happened. His reply, quite innocent and genuine, was 'Don't know, Sir, this morning I put the hand (and) - nothing!' He was referring to the pigeonholes in his desk.³⁶

At stock take each month there was a fairly significant shortfall in the stock of petrol and the RM's explanation was that this was always the case and due to the heat of the (fire-safe concrete) bunker in which the petrol was stored. I did not swallow that one and set about trying to find out what was going on. I was either told, or deduced from something I had seen or heard, that every weekend the RM rode to Kandy (at least two hours away) and back on his motorcycle to see his family. I did not punish him but must have had a quiet word or two in his ear because the petrol stock stopped evaporating.

The viability report on Ingoya was written by me, and sent off, with me having put together the agricultural side of things and the Dewalakande PD the majority of the factory and manufacturing side. Naturally, this was preceded by us discussing, over time, the pros and cons of a range of relevant issues. No recommendations were made either way in regard to the sale of the property, but it would be fair to assume from present recollections, that the report was not a positive one overall. A copy was sent to Dewalakande and I got a phone call from that PD. The first thing he said was, 'You bloody fool!' Asked why, he said that I had stated in the report that he was responsible for the factory and manufacturing aspects in it and that he should be given credit for that. I replied that that was how it was; that all I had done was give credit where credit was due and that I was not one to take the credit for what someone else had done.

The PD who took over from me was the next senior to me in the company and was a rather insecure, apprehensive person. This was once well illustrated by the PD on Dewalakande who, though not well acquainted with this person had heard about him, on hearing his name mentioned once said, 'Ah, yes. He is the one who, if a labourer farts in the field, thinks he is suffering from gunshot injuries!' This characteristic was well demonstrated during this PD's stock take. He was so painstaking with the rubber stocks that this took about three times longer than it need have taken. With the paint stocks, the contents of some of the drums were hard and useless, and with the tools, there was an awful mess because about thirty percent (Rs 3000 is a figure that comes to mind) was missing for various "Ingoya style" reasons - some were with this one and some with that one, some were on loan and so on. He started fussing and I was getting fed up because the whole business was taking far too long. So I said to him, 'Just write there, "unusable" or "missing" and "Written off", but the poor chap started to hum and haw and get worked up, so I took the stock book from him, wrote "Written off", signed it and said, 'Now if this creates any problems, I will answer for it.'

In due course I left to go on four months furlough and, for the first and last time, felt as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders despite the fact that I had at no stage felt any stress. This made me realise the wisdom of the Company's decision to give all its executive staff furlough.

³⁶ In the circumstances the car could be sent to Dewalakande to borrow some labels but this would not always be possible. In any case it was bad organization on the part of the RM.

HOUPÉ

(2482 acres)

Category - Low grown

1961

When in England on furlough, or immediately prior to my departure on furlough, I was told that on my return I would be going to Houpe to act for that PD who would be going on furlough for four months. When in London I received two letters from Houpe, one from the senior SD and one from the PD who, incidentally, had been my PD on Glenlyon where I crept. The senior SD was a close friend, as were the other SDs, and his letter was written to assure me that, where he and his fellow SDs were concerned, "a clear line would be drawn between work and play". From the tone of his letter, and knowing the man, I felt that he was telling me that he would ensure this assurance. The PD's letter on the other hand was different. He congratulated me on being appointed to act on Houpe and went on to say, 'We are all very happy to hear about this. The only person who is not, is the midwife, in anticipation of her expected extra workload after you leave!' A bit "rude" I thought, but then, me being some seven thousand miles away he was quite safe from physical harm!

Houpe comprised four divisions: Dalukgalla, Yainna and Lower Division - all tea, and a fourth in old rubber. At one time there were four SDs but now three, on the tea divisions. There was a Conductor on the fourth. The SD of Yainna came to England on furlough when I was in London, and met me there - but this account is not about that!

By the time I arrived back in Ceylon, changes in Government regulations had precluded the furlough of the Houpe PD with the result that I was temporarily superfluous in the Company and on Houpe. The SD on furlough was due back in about two months so I was put in charge of Yainna and moved into his bungalow. After his return from furlough, we shared the bungalow and he ran the rubber division until my departure.

Unfortunately for all on Houpe the plantation was barely making a profit - a state of affairs not attributable to the then managerial staff, nor, perhaps, to their predecessors. I say 'unfortunately' because all facilities were kept on a care and maintenance basis, and this resulted in the residents at all levels not being able to enjoy the excellent residential embellishments enjoyed by those elsewhere in the Company. In this I do not include the workers, whose residential facilities anywhere were unsatisfactory to say the least, even with the Company's capital programme.

Prior to my arrival, there had developed on Yainna a labour dispute which had generated continuing discontent in the resident workforce, mainly Tamil, and this discontent was unresolved when I arrived. I cannot remember what it was, though it was not something one could sit down and solve in a matter of minutes; it must have been a standoff of some sort. All I remember is a seething discontent which was liable to erupt into violence. At morning muster I used to park my motor bike facing down hill and on the periphery of the muster ground to facilitate a quick and safe escape should the need arise. Also, having briefly discussed the muster details with the staff, I would stand with apparent disdain and fearlessness, stick in hand, with the sun behind my back so that I could see the shadow of anyone coming up behind me. I was not fearful, but prepared, and this was also a bit of psychology at play. One day the resident (Sinhalese) building contractor came to me and said, 'We hear that you are having some trouble with the workers. Just give us the word and we will cut all the throats from the chickens upward.' I thanked him and said that that sort of thing was not necessary, and that things would work out all right. The 'we' was the Sinhalese - he, his men, and the villagers and, aside from the chickens etc., the implied 'them' were the Tamil workers.

A great deal can be written about the social antics of the four SDs, and at times the PD as well, but since such does not come within the purview of this document this will not be done. However, since the opinion of workers **does** come within the purview, I quote the expressed view of a worker, or that of the workers in general, 'Houpe SDs have always been a crazy lot but this lot is the worst.' - probably said with affection but definitely without malice!

So endeth the last act!

FORRES

(323 acres)

Category - High grown

1961/1962

Returning to a plantation where one has had no serious problems with workers or staff is uncomplicated. You know everyone and they know you, and those who do not have heard about you. In the field most is familiar.

There was a new Head Clerk - the errant Mr. Pillai of Dewalakande notoriety, in his first appointment as HC - but he was errant no more. He was efficient and helpful and we formed a good team from day one. During my act on Forres I had taken to dictating correspondence and reports etc. rather than drafting correspondence and most senior clerks had either learned to write quickly or developed a form of shorthand. It was not till I got to Alton that I came across a clerk proficient in shorthand. It was also during this stint on Forres that I did something about my long held concern about after-hours bookwork of staff. There was nothing I could do about the time consuming checkroll but I could do something about their having to, every day, rule up a page of the Field Diary and the Factory Diary as the case may be. I got these printed and bound, at considerable cost per book, but it was worth it. I think I also started paying those doing these books after work two hours overtime per day. These was not queried by anyone despite the fact that it was, probably, the first time it was done in the Company. I did this on every plantation I was sent to, again without query.

This was the first time I had to do the Estimates for the coming year and I enjoyed it. The Estimates consisted of two parts viz. Revenue expenditure (or recurrent expenditure) and Capital expenditure. Since the final determining factor in Estimates was the C.O.P./lb of the revenue component, one had to calculate, on the one hand, the anticipated yield per field which varied according to its pruning cycle and the level of nitrogen to be received via fertilizer, thus getting the yield for the plantation, and on the other hand, the expenditure on each item of the one hundred and thirty five or so items. From this, one would arrive at a provisional C.O.P./lb. Thereafter it was merely a matter of judicious adjustment of the various costs to achieve the desired result. If the final Estimates, or any significant change in an item, or some items, varied substantially from previous Estimates, or if there was any policy change, these were set out in the report on the Estimates and, where necessary, justified. Thereafter, it was a matter of the reviewer of the estimates, previously the General Manager, now GS, and then the Board, approving the Estimate or requiring reductions and/or changes. Neither on Forres, nor anywhere else, was an Estimate of mine changed despite, at times, my making major increases or decreases under specific items and/or in policy.

One day, soon after my return, I was going round the fields with the Conductor when I noticed a small, old earth slip on the roadside and I said to him, 'Did I not tell you to plant that up in Guatemale grass?' - the answer, 'Yes, Sir, you did. That was eighteen months ago!'

The water supply to the PD's bungalow and to the staff bungalows (and, perhaps to the lines) came from the bottom of a normally small waterfall dropping down from the top of a high rock face behind the PD's bungalow. During rain the volume of this increased. I did not know and did not check where this came from, except that it came from the plantation above Forres. I suspected, but did not check, that this was not water from a spring just out of sight, but this was the only source for Forres. Because the water pressure in the pipeline was very low, I installed a new line starting with three inches at the top and reducing as it descended and, when this was completed, the bungalow had tremendous pressure. As I discovered, so had the staff bungalows but there, the pressure was causing leaks. This was put right.

Perhaps due to the possibility of the nationalisation of plantations by the Government, all PDs were asked to prepare for the Board, an Estimate with only expenditure reduced to 25% on all items. To me this was all right in theory but not in practice, as the practical implications of such a reduction would have a devastating impact on yield and, therefore, COP. At the time it did not occur to me that the Board was more than likely to be aware of this but needed the information sought, so I wrote an accompanying report detailing all the consequences of such an expenditure cut, consequences such as reduction in yield due to a 75% cut in fertilizer coupled with the devastation that would be caused by blister blight due to the limitation or cessation of copper spraying. Perhaps I was over reacting but, if I was, and this created annoyance at any level, I was not told.

The procedure prevalent in the CTP of titivating things for visiting VIPs I discarded because a cosmetic show not only cost time and money but was misleading and, therefore, unhelpful. I was of the opinion that they should see my plantations as they were at any given time, and that if anything was, or appeared to be, other than at its best, there was a good reason. This change did not cause any ripples in the pond then or later.

My VA on Forbes proved to be one of the innovative, modern-thinking types; one not hide-bound but well versed in the fast expanding science of tea planting. As it turned out, we disagreed on little and, if we were unable to find common ground, we quite happily agreed to each express his view, he in his report and I, in due course, in my comments on it. One disagreement had to do with the pruning of a particular field. He felt that I had pruned it too hard and I did not. We walked a little, stopped a little, and walked a little, for about twenty minutes exchanging views on this matter without reconciliation and agreed to disagree. He put his views in his report, GS commented in their letter covering the report that they were disappointed, and my reply stated my views, and the Board made no comment. Although I used to discuss aspects of planting with him, and any other knowledgeable planter I could find, outside the plantation, the time spent with him during his visits was very interesting and productive, and we got on very well - both "in the field" and off.

One of the things I admired about this man was that at the start of a visit he used to ask me what I wanted him to see, and left it to me to take him where I wanted. On one occasion we walked past a small patch of ribbon grass but he made no comment.

This was the first time that a factory came within my responsibilities and I made full use of it. It was here that I started the practice of tasting teas almost daily - samples from the previous day's manufacture as well as the usual samples received from nearby factories if available. Tea manufacture was of great interest to me and I set about learning as much about it as I was able and seeing what could be done to improve it on Forbes. I also tasted the teas from each invoice³⁷ and kept in touch with the tea tasting reports received on them from the tea Brokers. I discovered that I had a good palette for tea tasting.

I started to implement changes to fine tune manufacture and improve prices if that was possible.

In factories, various records were kept of temperatures at different times in the course of manufacture but I suspected that, where not done mechanically, this record keeping was rather perfunctory. For my purposes I needed accurate records; particularly in the lofts where I did not want the temperature exceeding the maximum allowable of 80° F as temperatures in excess of this adversely affected the quality of the finished product. The moisture content of the air in the lofts at any given time was also important. Not only did I need the full co-operation of the TM and his staff but also that of the workers who had also to be reassured that, if the records showed that a mistake had occurred, the worker responsible would not be punished. I also needed temperatures, particularly in the lofts, and when artificial heat and/or forced air was in use in the lofts, taken every half-hour. I also redesigned the time-honoured format of the factory diary. In the old format, on each page of this diary was recorded all the work done in the one day, although on any given day there would be tea from three different, consecutive, days of plucking, processed from withering to sifting. Packing came later, and that packed could include tea from more than three days. What I wanted was the history of one day's plucking to be recorded on one page of the diary so that if there was any change in quality it could be traced back to a particular day's green leaf. In the old format, the history of one day's leaf, from harvest to the completion of manufacture was recorded on three consecutive pages. I must have improved the prices judging by what transpired later when I was on Radella between me and the "tea" Director of GS.

The single car garage of the bungalow was at one corner of the garden sixty yards or more from the front door, the closest door, of the bungalow. This seemed silly to me so I converted the last room of the rear wing of the bungalow into a garage, built an apron in front of it, and connected this, round the front and side of the building, by a new roadway to the one by the old garage. The old garage was left for visitor's cars.

An unusual feature of this bungalow was that the driveway continued to some of the fields, with the result that the lorry drove through the garden whenever there was a need in the fields accessed by the road. Furthermore, the pluckers moving from one to another of the fields bordering the garden had to walk through the garden. This did not bother me until, one Sunday, I was sitting out in the front, having a drink, or two, or three, with visitors, when a stream of pluckers walked through, staring and making comments amongst themselves. It was then that I realised that this lack of privacy was not ideal and resolved to rectify it. The solution was to create a field path - a simple and cheap exercise - around the garden, between the hedge and the tea. I was not happy about this because it seemed to be a slur on the pluckers and because they had to

³⁷ Each batch of tea shipped out of the factory was called an "invoice".

walk further; but did it nevertheless. Other advantages were that they now had easy access to their tea rows by the hedge and supervision access was improved.

In the factory I came across a disused telephone set-up of two telephones, one in the lofts and one in the rolling room on the ground floor. This was installed by my predecessor but was impractical because of the noise in the rolling room. I took this set-up and installed it in my bungalow with one instrument in the sitting room and the other next to the kitchen, much to the amusement of many visitors. The reason for this was that I had become aware that the servant/s did a lot of walking when one rang for something from the sitting room. They had to walk about twenty yards to the sitting room to find out what one wanted, twenty yards to the back to get it, twenty yards to the sitting room to delivery it and then twenty yards back again having completed the errand. That is eighty yards for some soda or some ice! With the free new communications this was halved.

When the tappal coolie³⁸ was not on his way to or from the post office with the mailbag he worked in the PD's garden - the usual practice on all our plantations. The Forres tappal coolie was doing something in the ceiling of a bathroom in the bungalow one day when he fell through the ceiling on to the toilet bowl. His femur hit the edge of the bowl and broke, and he was despatched to the hospital. About a week later, he returned to Forres and came to see me with his family as the fracture had not been set properly. The break was at the neck of the femur and, therefore, difficult to set, but the plaster cast only went up as far as the fracture but did not enclose it and, because of this, was ineffectual: there was a large callous above the plaster! They told me that when they had pointed this out to the doctor, he had said, 'Come back sometime and we will break it and reset it.' I was appalled and very angry, and almost phoned the doctor to give him a piece of my mind. The family asked if they could go to Kandy to get the leg attended to there by a Buddhist priest who was an ayurvedic physician and very good at this sort of thing. They did not have to ask me but I, naturally, gave my consent and blessing.

When they returned a week or two later the leg was perfectly straight and heeled. The bone had not been re-broken, the priest had merely used special oils to soften it and re-aligned it.

Since I was last on Forres government approval had been given for a hydroelectric dam project that would eventually flood about two thirds of the plantation and many others around. On Forres, the factory and all the lines and staff bungalows would go under water as well as the usual main road approach to the bungalow. The flood level contour was marked before I came, or while I was there, and what it indicated for the PD's bungalow was that the bungalow would be left twenty or thirty feet above the waterline, the garden plus some tea jutting out a little into the water. It was going to be a beautiful setting. As for the tea, what would be left was a hill opposite the bungalow connected by a narrow neck of tea to the three or four remaining fields on the hillside behind and alongside the bungalow.

The flooding was far enough away in time not to warrant any change to agricultural practice.

On Laxapana, which was next door to Forres, the factory and the PD's bungalow were to be inundated, and one morning the SD came over with one of his directors who asked me whether I would design a new PD's bungalow for them. This being a wonderful opportunity I happily accepted - although he made no mention of any payment! I spent a most enjoyable time designing a bungalow of about sixty-five squares, one of whose features was that, standing in the front garden one looked through large windows in the drawing room and dining room to another lawn and garden at the back. I have no idea whether a new bungalow was ever built, or whether, if one was, it was the one I designed. I only ever designed floor plans.

³⁸ From the Tamil taval karan = mail man.

RADELLA

(499 acres)

Category - High Grown

1962/1964

Radella was a gem! Its tea was relatively high jat, its tea prices in the top four in Ceylon and it had been extremely well managed by at least the last three PDs. In addition, set in a large, very attractive garden was the PD's bungalow which, though old, was attractive and overlooked the Radella Club and playing field which were in the plantation. Surrounding the club and grounds were the remnants of the one time racecourse now mostly reclaimed for tea. It was generally accepted that the PD of Radella was the Ground Secretary of the Club, although I cannot recall that this entailed much work.

The VA, from about 1960, was the one I had on Forres.

The plantation, owned by The Ceylon Proprietary Tea Plantations Co., started at an elevation of about 4500 ft. and climbed to about 5500 ft. In the office were a HC and two clerks, and in the factory a TM and an Assistant TM - there may have been a junior assistant TM as well.

The office consisted of two rooms, one for the PD and one for the clerks. My first requirement in any office was that everything in it be conveniently to hand - left, right and centre - and this I did here. I was not happy with the arrangement with the single telephone which was on the PD's desk although used by all the clerks as well - a most unsatisfactory arrangement as it involved the clerks, and particularly the HC, running too and fro, from one room to the other. Soon, I devised a Heath Robinson solution to this; I knocked a hole in the end of the dividing wall behind my left shoulder, installed a concrete shelf just above desk height running from my office to the other, where the HC sat, and by means of rails, a little trolley and some cord, trundled the telephone from room to room as needed! For a degree of privacy on either side and as sound mitigation, a sliding door was fitted to the hole in the wall like a service hatch. Voila! no problem. As soon as I could, as I had done on Forres, I got new printed and bound diaries for Radella and, I think, paid the overtime I had paid on Forres.

The factory was a challenge. Here was a place with a record of high tea prices, and in charge of it was a senior TM with many years on Radella. He was in his late fifties and I twenty-eight and not long a PD. Somehow, I had to gain his confidence. From the inception I had, of course, familiarised myself with the manufacture and started my regular tea tasting, the checking of the various aspects of manufacture, (including the very important fermenting³⁹) and monitoring of Brokers reports etc. I had also been tasting, and discussing with the TM, tea samples from the area but, to get his enthusiastic support, I had to convince him that I "knew my stuff". Having decided on what to do I told him one day that the following day I would taste tea "blind"⁴⁰. When I arrived the next morning, he was prepared and started to brew five samples. I tasted them and, I could hardly believe it, I had identified all five correctly! Although I had been tasting such samples since I arrived on Radella my success must have had an element of luck to it. Be that as it may, I had made a point even though there was no obvious reaction from the TM that I can recall. Mind you, he had not at any stage been antagonistic or uncooperative - quite the reverse, but then, I had not yet started making changes to his manufacture. A new diary in my new format was ordered and delivered and we set about making changes that bore fruit.

At one time I tasted a particularly fine BOPF sample, and the TM, his assistant, and I agreed that that particular invoice would fetch a top price. At just about this time the CTP Director in GS visited and when we were in the factory I told him about this tea and our expectations. I asked him to taste it but he said he knew nothing about tea tasting. However, when pressed, he agreed and the tea was brewed and tasted. He said he would note the invoice number and keep a watch for what price it fetched. As it happened, it fetched the top price of Rs 2.58 or 2.86/ lb and also earned a certificate of some sort. During a visit I paid to the GS Director "of tea", whose career with GS had been on the tea manufacturing, tasting, selling and shipping side, and he told me that now that I was on Radella I would not be able to increase tea prices (as its prices were already at the top). I do not know whether this was a statement or a challenge but it was said in his usual friendly manner, and I countered with, 'All right, lets wait and see!' implying that I would increase the

³⁹ During the process of fermentation there was a critical point below which a tea was not ready and above which the quality deteriorated. The only way to test this was to stick one's nose into a double handful of the fermenting tea.

⁴⁰ The various samples are unmarked as to their origin.

Radella prices. A year later when I saw him I said, 'During the last year (average) high grown prices fell by 15° a pound and Radella's prices went up by 7° a pound. That means, in effect, that my prices rose by 22° a pound!!' The GS directors with whom I came in contact, and the Assistant in charge of the CTP, were a pleasure to deal with; they were always friendly and easy to get on with despite my often forthright communications.

In the process of the selection of suitable clonal tea, the first characteristics sought were the physical ones such as rooting, branching, yield and resistance to pests and diseases. Thereafter came selection in respect of the characteristics "in the cup". Put simply, these were colour, strength and flavour. At the TRI this was done and those clones with the prefix TRI and numbers in the low 2000 produced excellent teas in the cup. However, it became apparent with the passage of time that when many, if not most, of these clones were mixed during manufacture the results in the cup were undesirable at best. This was a major problem particularly on plantations where there had been large areas of clonal planting. One such large plantation, Meddecombra, where a replanting programme on a large scale had been initiated in the early fifties, was especially affected and the PD asked me whether I would mind tasting and evaluating for him a variety of the mixes he was getting in his factory. Both to help him, and so as not to miss such an unusual and interesting opportunity, I said that I would be happy to do so. Consequently, he started sending me samples which I tasted and reported on to him. The results were remarkable, as was the problem this presented.

On its higher elevation plantations the Company had a variety of shade trees. As high shade there were, not necessarily on the one plantation, *Grevillea robusta*, *Albizzia moluccana* and *Albizzia sumatrana*, and as low shade as well as for green manure *Acacia decurrans*, *Acacia pruinosa*, *Acacia terminalis* and the dadap (*Erythrina indica*). The high shade trees and the dadaps were planted on a grid, more open for the former, and the Acacia's either on a grid or in lines as wind breaks. The low shade was lopped periodically at a height of about six feet above the tea and the loppings forked into the ground. Grevilleas had been found to be a focus of infection by the poria fungus which then spread to the tea with serious consequences. Consequently, on many plantations these were being ring barked so as to kill the tree as well as deplete the source of food for the fungus in the tree's roots. I for one, was not planting any more grevilleas.

The question of shade was being debated amongst the planting community following the TRI's conclusion that its removal resulted in huge increases in yield. Initially the Institute found that this increased yield fell off sharply after two years, but later found that the cause of this fall was the depletion of nutrients in the soil and the plants and that this was avoided by the application of sufficient fertilizer, for nitrogen, to sustain the increased yield. There was concern from some that, without the trees and windbreaks, wind would adversely affect yield. If it did, it was not evident and there was also the fact that a complete cover of tea on the slope reduced the impact of wind. Amongst the planters there were the "troglodytes", the "cautious" and the "movers". I fell into the last category, as did my VA. The high shade on Radella was not particularly dense. If it had not been stopped prior to my arrival, I stopped the planting of any more shade trees.

From observing the state of foliage and budding points on bushes under the high shade trees, in particular the grevilleas, and the medium shade trees other than the dadaps, it was obvious to me that these bushes were yielding only 90% or less of their potential. I roughly extrapolated this to a possible annual yield loss of at least 70,000 lbs for the plantation and discussed it with my VA. Everything considered, I started removing all shade other than the dadaps and, on one occasion, the VA commented in his report that he was not pleased that I had removed the high shade from a particular field. Comments from GS were faintly critical and those from the Board even less so. I cannot, today, explain why he said what he did but he must have had a reason and we, no doubt, discussed it. Later, I removed all the dadap shade as well but things were not as they seemed as I had pollarded the trees below the level of the tea so that they were there should it be necessary to quickly re-establish some shade. This was simply a precaution, as I had no doubt as to the validity of the case for no shade, provided, of course, that fertilizer was at least adequate. I heard of one of our senior CTP PDs, and my acting PD on Holyrood c.1958, on whose plantation the planting of shade was going ahead full steam, sitting on the Radella Club verandah, looking up at the apparently shadeless Radella and saying, 'I am looking at the demise of Radella!'

We were also talking about the need, with ever increasing tea yields on old and new plantings, to replace the existing policy of basing the fertilizer requirements of a field in one year on its yield in the previous year, by one based on its **potential** in the coming year. In fact, we may even have started that policy in estimates finalised while I was on Radella. I cannot remember specific annual yield figures, but I get the impression that these, from about 1961, were 1200 and 1400 with projections of 1800 which was not excessive as the existing tea had good potential and there was a programme of replanting in place with clones with the potential to yield 3500 lbs/ acre.

As one would expect on a plantation such as this, plucking was a major activity, and one involving the co-opting of men pluckers more than usual on other plantations. The men's standard of work was above average when compared to other places. Some of them were really excellent pluckers, and not just in terms of the amount of leaf they brought in.

This was the time that well educated, English speaking, young men were being employed on plantations as Supervisors - a title to differentiate them from the KPs and Kanganies who, it seemed, they would eventually replace. I took on a few - perhaps because I had terminated the work of some kanganies - and one by the name of Welsh was particularly good, and soon came to know and understand what I wanted on a plantation and why. For one reason or another I found myself in need of a Plucking KP and offered the job to my ex Thalaivar "friend" Veeriah on Cymru. It was a promotion and he jumped at it, and did a good job too.

Inexplicably, I did not introduce, anywhere, the innovative practice of three-day plucking rounds that had been so successful on Cymru. Perhaps I did not have the time, as a PD, to devote to the training of pluckers - I do not know. However, a lot of constructive work went into plucking with excellent results and absolutely no trouble. I could see, from my garden, across a small valley, the path that led from the fields around the club to the factory. This path was rather steep and was the direct route to the factory for the pluckers with their baskets of leaf at the end of some days. Perhaps in 1962, when the flushing was at its highest, I saw these poor women lugging over-full, heavy baskets as well as shawls full of leaf up this path after "late plucking", and decided that I would immediately introduce a fourth weighing in the field each day in high yielding fields at 3.30 (or 4?) using the lorry for transport to the factory. I later realised that there were more benefits to this than worker contentment: there would be far less bruising and heating of the leaf and the pluckers, being relieved of the weight of leaf, would go like the clappers to refill their baskets! They did not, however, overload again.

At a rough guess grass ravines comprised 1% of Radella, that is 5 acres, and these ravines cost money because the cooch grass on their edges had to be periodically dug out by hand to prevent incursion into the tea. I proposed, via the Estimates, that these ravines be reclaimed and planted in high yielding VP tea (by then there was no other material used) as production would be increased by about 17,500 lbs. per annum and maintenance costs eliminated. The proposal went through.

I built a new store/green leaf weighing room in the factory compound across from the front door of the factory, and, I think, had plans drawn up for an extension to the factory ground floor in which may have been included the installation of a new Rotovane - one of the new generation of machines that were being developed to replace tea rollers. Since 1952, in the lofts of factories nylon mesh tats had replaced hessian tats and these, in turn, were soon to be replaced by withering troughs.

The water for the PD's bungalow came from a spring a hundred yards away. The spring was just below a cart road and was exposed to pollution from road dust, rainwater runoff etc. To improve things I dug back into the bank a couple of yards, following the spring, built a small concrete bund through which ran a 2" galvanized pipe plus a 3" one about ten feet long, as an overflow, concreted in the lot and filled in the bank. The bungalow water supply pipe was attached to the 2" pipe. The overflow pipe was ten feet long so that, should there be any major labour trouble in the future and someone wanted to poison the PD's water supply, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to access the spring. Water for the staff was sourced from an open grass ravine in which the water was clear but the soil red with iron salts due to stagnation. I deepened the drainage drains, put in the tunnels etc., a la Tangakelle, levelled over the ravine and tapped the water underground in a way similar to what I had done for the PD's bungalow. For the workers I found a suitable spring some distance from the lines from which I piped the water to the lines but, as the water was not clean enough for my liking, I built a sand-filter tank between the spring and the lines.

I had a very good HC. However, at one time the Estimates for the coming year were due, as usual, by a certain date and I was due to go on holidays after this date. Not long before this, my HC advised me that he would not be able to complete the estimates in time for me to approve them and despatch them to Colombo by the due date. I cannot remember what the reason for this was but it was not good enough, so I asked him to take down a letter to GS. In this letter I told GS that the HC was unable to meet the deadline, and asked whether they wished me to postpone my leave. They told me to go as planned and send the estimates in on my return. The poor HC was very upset by the severity of my action - and he may have been justified to a degree. However, that was the only blot on his copybook and I would not have done anything but commend his work as a whole. On the subject of letters, the PD from whom I took over Radella went to Somerset which was next door⁴¹ and, three months after the change, I received a letter from GS addressed to him, but

⁴¹ But in a different postal area.

at Radella! I noticed this when the letter was not making sense to me. Amongst other things it gave him the go-ahead to prune a certain field. I decided that I would have a tongue in cheek go at GS (also a mild rebuke?) but first phoned my friend next door and told him that he could go ahead and prune the particular field and a couple of other things. He could not work out how I knew all this until I told him what had happened. He said he would send his driver over to get the letter but I said, 'No, I am going to send it back to GS telling them that you left Radella three months ago and that you are now on Somerset.' This worried him and he tried to dissuade me; besides, he wanted his letter. Anyway, I sent the letter back to GS stating the above and a couple of days later got a reply, in no way varying from the norm, thanking me for my letter pointing out that Mr. T was on Somerset, and that they had sent it to him!

The PD's bungalow had three bathrooms, attached to the three bedrooms, but these were at garden level whereas the house was about four feet higher. Hence, in each was a flight of steps from the bedrooms. I remedied this unsafe situation by raising the floors, and everything else with them, to the level of the bedrooms and it was a distinct improvement. Similarly, the entire rear area of the house, comprising the kitchen, storerooms etc. was seven steps below the house proper so, the year before I left, I designed alterations to the rear section that included lifting it to the height of the rest of the house, and included in the Estimates for the coming year Rs76,000, if I remember correctly, for these alterations. It was approved but I moved before the work could be done.

In the CTP, PDs were paid Rs 480 per month as training fees and expenses during the six months of a creeper's training. It was on Radella that I got my first creeper, as did my friend on Somerset who, with me, went to Colombo to sit on a selection panel comprised of ourselves, the GS Director for the CTP and the CTP Assistant. The selection itself was virtually left to us PDs and I selected someone older than was customary for the CTP because his qualities prevailed over his age. The Company usually took creepers just about straight from school, if not straight from school, because, not having yet got used to city life they could be expected to adapt better to the relative solitude of plantation life. This creeper was twenty-three years old and some of his contemporaries had already been planting for five years or more. This meant that when he left me he would go straight into the lifestyle and attitudes of experienced young planters and I felt it incumbent on me to equip him for this as well as train him as a creeper. The main thing I thought was necessary was that I condition him to late nights and over-indulgence followed by early and punctual starts the next morning. This was all well and good except that to achieve this I had to keep him out late and get up early to spy on him to ensure that he did what was required! He did not let me down and I did not continue my spying after two observations.

As I was to do with later creepers, and the SDs to come, I gave him my full support, my trust and my friendship but I required a high sense of duty and a high standard of work. I socialised with him but made sure that he knew the difference between work and play. I crammed his head with everything I could think of from CTP traditions and values, to the experiences of others and myself, to the finer points of planting, explaining that at some time in the future when faced with something, hopefully a bulb would light in his head and bring to mind something helpful from what had gone in during his creeping. He impressed me during his creeping and he even blooded himself when first using a pruning knife! I imparted to him everything I knew. One evening I had gone down to the club early for something and he walked down later. He came up to me at the bar and, although the accepted dress was coat and tie, he was without either. I looked him up and down and asked him where his tie and coat were and ordered him back to the bungalow to get dressed properly. Eventually, he left me with an excellent report.

The CTP had some connections in Kerala, India, and had arranged for a PD from a plantation there to visit some of its plantations in Ceylon to see how they were run. Kerala was a 'dry' state.

This PD came to Radella from Beaumont, a mid-country plantation, on a Friday and left on the Monday for Holyrood. Not only did I give him maximum information relative to tea as grown and manufactured on Radella but, the weekend coming in the middle of his visit, also an insight into the social aspects of planting in a non 'dry' place. I found him, first thing on the Saturday morning, attempting to bring his notes up to date. He was still doing the Beaumont notes whilst jovially bemoaning the hospitality shown him to date by his hosts. One wondered whether the social experience came at the cost of erudition. Be that as it may he enjoyed his stay.

A good friend and contemporary of mine, who was VA of a few plantations, told me that considerably more VAing was in the offing for him and asked me whether, if he got that work, I would take over the VAing that he was doing and I was only too pleased to agree, subject, of course, to approval from the CTP. This came as a big surprise as I had given such a possibility no thought. In the end, I moved to rubber and nothing came of this as far as I was concerned.

Early in 1964, I received a letter from GS conveying a communication from the Board to the effect that Radella's profit for the year 1963 was a remarkable £284 per acre, and extending their own and the Board's congratulations. This equated to a profit for the plantation of about 144,000 Pounds Sterling or Rs. 1,728,000 - or about 864 times my monthly pay!⁴² Although this was possible only because of my predecessors, whose good work formed the platform from which I had worked, I was, naturally, pleased - it **was** quite an achievement. In my response I gave due credit to my predecessors.

⁴² To put this in context, my salary at the time would have been Rs 2600 - Rs 2700/month.

ALTON

(758 acres cultivated)

Category - High Grown

Sept. 1964/Sept. 1967

Alton, prior to the tenure of my predecessor, had been allowed to deteriorate very badly. When he took over c.1960, the majority of the acreage was overrun by ribbon grass and cooch and the bushes, though of a reasonably good jat, were crammed with moss and ferns and the branches spindly and, therefore, unproductive. What other problems he inherited I am not sure but from what I experienced after my arrival I expect that bad supervision at all levels was one of them. There had also been an incident where there was a dispute, which developed into a fracas, between the two unions about the hoisting of a flag and the then PD went down to sort it out and was assaulted. He went to hospital with head injuries.

During my predecessor's tenure huge sums of money were spent on deep forking to remove the ribbon grass and cooch more than once each year for years, and the removal of the moss and ferns from within the bushes at pruning. To achieve this latter the bushes had to be 'opened up' when they were pruned so as to get at the moss and ferns. This was followed by the spraying of the bushes with lime (Calcium hydroxide) to kill what moss remained. When he did this pruning he went one step further and pruned extremely hard, in some cases all that was left was the stump of the bush. He called this the "Healing Saw" because extensive use of the pruning saw was made, with excellent results, but like the removal of shade, this created a lot of controversy, far too much of it based not on intelligent thinking but on emotion and ignorance. Due to very poor quartz soil 15 acres of the topmost field was not potentially viable and was abandoned.

This PD had also spent a lot of money, Rs 68,000 if I remember correctly, on doing up the bungalow magnificently and tastefully.



Alton. L - R: Managers' bungalow, office and factory 1978.

[Photograph courtesy of Hessel IJskes]

The plantation started at an elevation of about 4500 ft. and went up to 5500 ft. or more. There was nothing between it and the sea scores of miles away with the result that the south-west monsoon buffeted the upper two-thirds and it was very cold at these times. There were two divisions, Upper and Lower, with the latter in the process of being divided into two 'sub-divisions' for easier organization and supervision. This was due to the topography, and my predecessor had started building housing for a new, small community in the further sub division.

When I took over all the heavy pruning had been completed on the usual, for this elevation, four-year cycle and most of the other the intensive work completed, although the ribbon grass still required a lot of continuous follow-up work as any tiny piece left re-grew and it was extremely difficult to remove every piece. The tonnes of grass removed each time had to be carried to the nearest road to be stacked into compost piles but I was to find later that laziness and poor supervision had resulted in large quantities being buried in the field amongst the tea, thus creating further problems.

The office staff consisted of a HC and, perhaps, four assistants and the office was situated in a very odd place: a field path led from the bungalow garden and the office was situated about a hundred and fifty yards along this. It overlooked the factory somewhat but was near nothing, had no apron and no vehicle access. It was also rather small. As soon as I could, I designed and built a bigger, new office with staff toilet, next to the cart road that connected with the main entry road. This site was just below the edge of the PD's bungalow garden and I constructed a path from the garden to it. The old office I converted into a supervisor's house next to which I cleared a small vegetable garden.

In the factory were the TM, an Assistant TM and, perhaps, a second assistant. Tea prices were all right but no more. I had a new diary in my new format supplied for the factory (as well as for the field staff) and got the co-operation of the factory staff with no trouble at all. The ATM, in particular, was very enthusiastic and very good. In fact, I think he was on Radella as ATM and may have been transferred here on promotion not long before I came. In due course tea prices improved but not spectacularly.

In the field there was a Conductor on Lower Division and a KP on Upper Division. The Conductor had been on plantations in Kenya and on Gouravilla next door to Alton. Somewhere he had been badly assaulted by the workers and, as I was to discover, was scared of workers generally - natural but not helpful. This Conductor once told me that he thought he should get furlough as enjoyed by the executives.

During my time here I had the pleasure of training two more creepers. The first, I think, came with me from Radella and the other came to Alton following the departure of the first.

It did not take me long to find out that the standard of field supervision at all levels was not good. From this came the inevitability of bad work. I have mentioned above the burying of ribbon grass and I discovered other things as time passed. With my views in regard to shade being what they were, when I was walking through the tea if I came across a young shade tree I used to pull it up and throw it away - a stitch in time saves nine! I had stopped planting shade from the time I arrived. In one field I found that the plant I pulled up was still in its plastic sleeve, so I pulled up another, and another, and so on, and they were all the same. So I went to the office and from the diaries etc. managed to find out which kangany supervised that work and spoke to him the next day. I asked him if he was the one who had supervised that work and he said he had. I asked him whether the work was well done and he answered in the affirmative, so I told him to come with me and went to that field where I pulled up one plant and showed it to him, and then another, and so on and so on and so on. Then I told him that he was fired as a kangany. On a cart road one day I happened to notice, some distance away, about six tea bushes that were starting to brown, and when I investigated this I found that a 112 lb. sack of fertilizer had been buried there rather than broadcast, or because someone got his calculations wrong and ended up with a bag unused⁴³. For numerous such reasons, within a couple of months from when I started taking action I had fired about two thirds of the field staff. I think the Conductor at some time also left or was pushed. Not only was he accountable, but I discovered that, like most of them, he did not go to the fields during the afternoon! From Radella I got Welsh (on promotion) and some others, so I then had staff familiar with what I wanted and the willingness to get it done.

The previous PD had a lot of VAing, gave talks on the "Healing Saw" pruning etc. and these took him off the plantation a lot. He also had a fixed schedule of being in the office in the afternoons. I had my own way of doing things and, on Alton, because of its size in comparison to my previous plantations, used binoculars to check on work. I used to stand in the back of the Land Rover and scan the fields, then descend on the places where work was bad. The workers thought I had magical powers! Early one morning I came out to the front steps of the bungalow and noticed, at the far reaches of one side of Lower Division, a big

⁴³ Due to the extreme concentration of the fertilizer salts in the soil, the normal osmosis reverses and the plant's water content is rapidly exhausted, thus killing the plant if remedial action is not taken in time.

gang of men applying fertilizer. This was meant to be done one man per tea row but they seemed to be seven to eight rows apart. I went inside and got my binoculars and had a look and, yes, I was correct. Soon after, I went to the field - by this time, having seen me coming, everything was being done properly - and asked the people in charge how the work was going and whether it was all being properly done and so forth, and was assured that all was perfect. So I said, 'Good, come with me and we will have a look.' The look confirmed the gross slackness I expected and I sent the entire gang and the kanganies off without pay⁴⁴. To get home they had to walk past me on a field road and I stood there, facing away from the road, stick firmly grasped in my hand should it be needed, until they had all gone past.

At one time there was a major strike in the district but the Alton workers had decided to work - they may not have been members of the striking union - and a gang of pruners was pruning a field on the face of a hill at the top of which was some jungle forming the boundary between Alton and the neighbouring plantation. As my then creeper and I reached the field on foot the men started coming down complaining that they were being intimidated by striking men, from outside, on top of the hill. I told them, 'This is disgraceful! You have the knives, go and get them!'⁴⁵ but it made no difference. I turned to my creeper and the KP and, I think, a watchman and said, 'Come on, come with me.' and went charging up the hill. In the jungle at the top was a path and we took this path in the direction we thought would lead us to the perpetrators. Suddenly we heard someone approaching so we hid in the bushes and two men came our way. I gave one a good rugby tackle and I think my creeper did the same to another, and we had two of the troublemakers who we then marched off down to the office where they were made to sit on the floor until I decided what to do with them. On the way down my creeper had suggested that we tie the men's sarongs around their necks to shame them but I thought that that was going a bit too far! All this had, of course, created quite a stir on the plantation by then. The two turned out to be workers from Gouravilla, my ex VA's plantation next door, so I phoned him and told him what had happened and it was agreed that they be sent over to him and that he would deal with them.

Then there was another, similar strike, or perhaps it was the same one and this was another day, and my workers were working. We had to try to protect our workers so I sent my creeper to the "division" at the lowest end of the plantation saying that I would look after the other three fourths. A KP of mine came to me one day and said that he and his family - they lived in an isolated bungalow near a boundary - were frightened at night that they would be attacked. I told him to put some chilli powder into jars with water and have them ready to use if anyone tried to enter their house, and that I would hear any disturbance from my bungalow and would come to their rescue if necessary. Then I waited, this time with my gun handy, and the Land Rover at the ready. I had not long to wait. I was told that one mob of strikers was approaching where the creeper was, and another approaching a field halfway up the property above my bungalow where some of my pluckers were working. So I jumped into the Land Rover and the driver drove me up to near the danger spot. Just as I arrived, the mob came round the hill towards the pluckers and I jumped out of the Land Rover and yelled at them to go back but they only hurled abuse at me. I had No. 8 shot in my gun intentionally and aimed it at the mob and fired. I knew that the shot would not reach them at that distance but they did not know that. They turned and fled, and I followed on foot. When I reached a small ravine in the tea two of my supervisors emerged from the ravine where they had taken refuge and said, 'Sir, you saved our lives! A few more seconds and they would have reached us!' There is a very funny aside to this event. My neighbour on Fairlawn was shortish but built like a tank and had a very intimidating face. He had come across a mob on his property and charged them on foot. He said that he then saw the funniest thing he had ever seen - a man, so scared, and in such a hurry to get away from him, that he was literally 'running on top of the tea bushes'.

Alton was really too big and too elongated and steep to be run without an SD. My predecessor had raised the matter with the Company and been told that he could have one for six months provided that he put him up in the PD's bungalow. Needless to say he did not take up the offer. I raised the matter again because I really believed that an SD was essential for optimum management efficiency. I wrote a long letter detailing my reasons and including a careful breakdown of how the PD spent his time. The latter included all non-plantation duties such as Planters' Association meetings, C.E.E.F.⁴⁶ meetings and consultations, visits to GS in Colombo, leave, etc. etc. and clearly demonstrated what I stated: that a PD alone could not manage the place effectively. GS asked me to include an SD in the next year's Estimates, and this included a new bungalow, pay, allowances etc.

⁴⁴ This practice was soon to be deemed illegal and banned.

⁴⁵ Not meaning that they should chop them up but that the knives would be intimidatory.

⁴⁶ Ceylon Estates Employers Federation.

On Alton I started officially allowing the staff one worker per month, paid by the Company, to assist with the maintenance of their bungalow gardens. There was good reason for this although I cannot remember what it was.

There was a wire chute down which bags of green leaf weighing 45 lb or more came from Upper Division to the factory at considerable speed until they were slowed down as they approached the factory. One day a clerk came to me and asked whether he could have some used corrugated iron sheets. I said that he could but asked him why he wanted them and he said it was for his shed which had got damaged. Asked how it got damaged he said that a bag of leaf off the chute had fallen on to it. The shed was in a corner of his garden and I was surprised that I had not noticed the chute's proximity to dwellings and decided that I would look into this. On doing so, I found that the chute ran above the corner of his garden and close enough to some others to be dangerous, particularly for children who may be playing outside. This was not good enough for me so, when I was in Colombo soon after, I raised the matter with GS's CTP Assistant and said that the chute had to be moved. This was no simple matter because the wire was, in fact, a steel cable an inch or so thick and about a kilometre long, embedded in big concrete blocks at both ends. He smiled and asked me to discuss it with the CTP Director, which I did. He was non-committal as was to be expected but I wanted a decision - in fact, I wanted the money to move it, and soon - so I said matter of factly, 'Do I put it in black and white?' and his reply was, smiling, 'No, put it in the next estimates.'



Alton Managers' bungalow c.1964. Redesign of forecourt in progress.



Alton Managers' bungalow c.1964. Redesign of forecourt in progress.



Alton Managers' bungalow c.1964. Right side of front.

There was another little amusing incident with GS. I once received a letter from them quoting a section of a letter from the Board - an unusual occurrence. No matter how I tried, I could not make any sense of it so, as I was going down to Colombo a few days later, I decided not to write. When at GS, I asked the CTP Assistant what the letter meant and he chuckled and said 'Ask X!' (the CTP Director) who, when I saw him a few minutes later and put the same question to him, laughed and said, 'We couldn't make any sense out of it so we quoted it verbatim to you!' Since they got no result from me, no doubt, they referred it back to the Board for clarification! It was something to do with drains and forking.

On the VA's first visit to Alton after my arrival, I discussed with him my proposals in regard to shade trees and the pros and cons of these, and my experiences in this regard on Radella; that the liming of the bushes be discontinued as it had served its purpose, and showed him this in the field; that the forking of all fields after pruning be discontinued because of the extensive forking done, and being done, to remove cooch and ribbon grass; and some of the other changes I wanted to make. He was only in his forties but he was only moving slowly and cautiously with change. Regarding shade, he said that he had recently started experiments on his plantation and was awaiting results before he made any decisions - and I was saying to myself 'I did that years ago.' Do not get me wrong, he and I got on well enough on a personal level, and there were no arguments; it was just that we disagreed on many major issues - the old school versus the new so to speak. He had been VA for Alton for a few years now and was obviously part of the massive cleanup that had been effected, but from my point of view it was time for change. When his Report came via GS he had not recommended any of my suggestions. Hence, in my letter commenting on his Report I started with the words 'I do not wish what I have to say misinterpreted or misconstrued, what I say I say as Superintendent of this plantation and because I feel that it is my duty to do so.' and went on item by item, giving my recommendations and my reasons for them. The next I heard was in a letter from GS stating, "the Board have instructed that Mr. Gardner's recommendations be carried out." On his next visit, the VA was consulting me as to what I wanted to do.

With reference to the "Healing Saw" pruning the first fields so treated came up for pruning again when I was on Alton and the new wood growth was remarkable. Where there had been twigs there were now healthy, vigorous, new branches, some two inches thick; and moss and ferns were minimal and easily removed. It was obvious from this that to assess fertilizer needs the hitherto accepted policy of basing this on the yield of the previous year would be absurd, so I assessed the potential and used that assessment to determine the fertilizer requirements in the next year's Estimates when the were due.

In regard to water. There was a workers' line whose supply was a rusty trickle from a tap. This came from an underground spring at the base of a bank not far from the line but this spring was exposed to pollution, so I did in the bank what I had done on Radella for the PD's bungalow, but on a small scale: I also replaced the pipes, and gave them fresh, clean water. For the PD's bungalow all I can remember doing was replacing the existing galvanized pipe with black, flexible polythene pipe, possibly of a bigger size, buried in the ground out of reach of the long forks of the field workers. This pipe must have been about 600 yds. long.

On Lower division the entire supply was woeful, so I found a grass ravine which had a spring, again coming from under a bank, and gave this ravine the "treatment" of reclamation, and piped the water quite some distance to a large new concrete storage tank. The water was crystal clear, and there was so much that the three-inch overflow pipe was full. It was a wonderful sight.

At about this time Mr. Ronnie Brookes became the Chairman of The Board. He had a reputation for being ruthless, and there had been a story doing the rounds that when he became Chairman of Commercial Union he sacked a large number of staff in England. There were also stories circulating about his treatment of planters in Ceylon, planters in companies of which he was a Director or Chairman. One such case was to do with the PD of, I think it was Matakelle, when I was in that district. Apparently, in the course of his visit he had asked a few questions and the PD was unable to answer some of them. He said nothing at the time but at the end of his visit, when getting into his car to leave, he said to the PD, 'When I next come, if you do not have the answers to my questions I will sack you.' In this context it is interesting that my policy, since becoming a PD was that, in managing a plantation I would not clutter my brain with unnecessary facts and figures, facts and figures I could get when I wanted them from records or those of my staff primarily responsible for them. Nor would I carry a mass of such information on my person, for the same reason. Many PDs, including some in the CTP, during a visit by a Director or the Chairman, would carry information with them, but, as I said, this was not my way and I was prepared to argue the toss with any reasonable Chairman, Director or VA.

Mr. Brookes was due to visit Alton and I was very interested to meet him as I had been to meet any of the others, no more and no less if one wants comparisons, but I was very surprised by what he did when he arrived early on the appointed morning. There were five or six front steps to the Alton bungalow front door and, from the bottom step, the drive sloped away and down so that, sitting in the back seat of a car coming up the drive one could not see anyone standing on the top of the front steps. When I heard the car coming, I went to front entrance and as the car came up the garden drive, there was Mr. Brookes bending down, his head almost at his knees trying to see me and - would you believe it! - trying to wave with his hands, knees and face at about the same level. He was also smiling broadly. In due course we drove round the plantation and, no doubt, chatted about various things. When we were at the top, where the tea was abandoned, he said to me, 'You know, many years ago, I sold this place to the CTP! I hate it!' ⁴⁷ One of the capital items I was trying to get was an electronic stalk extractor and when we were in the factory we discussed this briefly, with me stating that it would pay for itself in four years. He looked me in the eye and said, quietly, 'And will an SD pay for himself in four years?' I looked at him in the eye and said, 'You should not **ask** questions like that, Sir!' And he laughed and moved on. Then the second surprise! When it was time to leave the factory it was raining heavily. I had my golf umbrella with me as we went out through the front door to the first floor overhang that forms a porch by which the driver had parked the Land Rover with the passenger side door closest to the factory. Mr. Brookes took the umbrella out of my hand, opened it, and ushered me to the further side door whilst protecting me from the rain whilst I got in and then went back to the passenger door. I have never been able to figure all this out nor has anyone given me any clues. Mind you, I was not **expecting** to have any trouble from him.

In due course, when the estimates came back the SD was allowed and the stalk extractor disallowed! This opened up for me a wonderful opportunity to give full rein to my creative instincts. I designed the floor plan for a reasonably spacious two-bedroom bungalow with, on the left, a single space for the sitting room and dining room separated only by a fireplace and chimney in random bluestone ⁴⁸ with the odd one of white or pink here and there. This stonework continued from the chimney to the outer wall at a low level and was faced with thick polished satin wood and, from the timber surface, two poles in the same timber ran up to the ceiling; the whole forming a half room divider containing a small liquor cabinet etc. On the right, but set back from the front were the two bedrooms, one behind the other so that the entry was near the corner formed by the sitting room wall and the first bedroom wall, and leading into the sitting room. The building continued backwards on the right side only to form the rear wing containing the kitchen, storeroom, servants' room and servants shower and toilet, in that order. Right at the back on the left was a small office and in front of that the garage. A verandah joined the two parts of the rear section and ran, open on one side, to the main section. The whole was under the one roof. The details of the roof design and the drafting of the design plan were done by the building arm of Hemachandra & Co. in Talawakelle, who built the bungalow. This design, though perhaps not the bluestone work, was adopted by GS as the standard for SD's bungalows.

⁴⁷ A few years later he sold it again!

⁴⁸ Not split and dressed.



Alton October 2009 - The driveway into the SD's bungalow.



Alton October 2009 - The SD's bungalow (left side).



Top and bottom. Alton October 2009 - The SD's bungalow.





Alton October 2009 - The SD's bungalow (front garden).

Then came the site. It was marvellous to have nearly 1000 acres from which to select a site but there was really only one good one. It was on a little, flattish knoll on whose side, away from the views and across a tiny valley, was ten acres of forest left, I presume, to catch and hold rainwater for the spring at its base that supplied water to the PD's bungalow and others further down. For water for the SD's bungalow, however, I had to find a spring from which I could gravity feed to it. Unless I found one I would have to look for another site. But I did find one. Added bonuses were that the cart road to Upper division ran by part of one side of the new garden, and the site was central to that part of the plantation which the SD would run if he did not run the whole.

When the SD arrived he was put up in the guest wing of my bungalow until his was complete. It was an understanding, a rule possibly, that one did not damage the walls of Company houses but when I went into his wing one day I noticed a large green "notice" board on a wall in the dressing room which he was using as an office. On closer examination I found that this was affixed to the wall by four wooden plugs embedded in cement with the result that there were big patches of raw plaster at each corner. I have mentioned before that this house had been beautifully decorated by my predecessor and, in the circumstances, what the SD had done was outrageous as far as I was concerned. That the board was for work related self-organisation was commendable but not the manner of its erection. He got a sound lecture and severe telling off and was made to remove the board and restore the wall to its original condition at his own expense. If not for this one wonders what he might have done in his brand new bungalow!

Alton was this SD's first appointment and, from my perspective, it was necessary to instil in new SDs in particular, the fundamentals of management. Thus, when one day during a period of late plucking, I came across him on his motorcycle, on his way home at 4.30 sharp, I asked him where he was going and he replied that he was going home, and I said, 'No you are not, work has not finished. Get back to work.'

The workers on Lower division decided on strike action⁴⁹ at the time when my then creeper was "in charge" of that division. I cannot recall the reason but it was not one that warranted compromise. At one point, when the leaf on the bushes was getting past the "recovery by plucking" stage, I told them, 'You can strike for as long as you like but remember that after you finish we will have to cut back all the overgrown tea and you will not have any plucking for even longer.' The strike petered out after not too long. It was after this strike that I found myself thinking of these workers in particular, and those on my other plantations in general, 'They are, after all, like children.'

Meanwhile, when the factory staff and workers had adopted, and were working well with, my refinements in manufacture and things were going well, I got a letter from GS telling me that my ATM was being transferred and being replaced by, as I discovered to my amazement, someone with no experience whatsoever. What had happened was that the PD on Beaumont had, commendably, sought to find employment in the Company for the son of his HC and, for whatever reasons, this was the outcome. I wrote to GS stating, 'I am surprised that you have seen fit to make this decision without even consulting me' and went on to explain why it was most inadvisable. The decision was reversed and the new recruit sent elsewhere.

At the bottom of the plantation there were three fields running horizontally across the face of a hill, and it struck me one day that naturally, and as a result of tilling, the soil at the top of this hill face was inferior to that at the bottom and the variation progressive from top to bottom; that, hence, the agricultural policy that treated each field as uniform was flawed and that the remedy was to re-orientate the field boundaries from vertical to horizontal so that, to put it a different way, instead of three vertical fields there were three horizontal ones, each far more uniform in condition and potential. Of course, this corrective principle applied on every slope on every plantation. Here, I cannot remember whether I allowed for the surveying and implementation of this for these three fields, as I moved again before the commencement of that new financial year.

The nature of the site of the PD's bungalow meant that the garden was relatively small; it tapered from broad at the front to very narrow at the back and, since it was at the back, the vegetable garden was small. To improve this latter problem the previous PD had reclaimed a reasonably large grass ravine in the tea some distance away and made it a vegetable garden. As this was inconvenient and theft could be a problem, I planted this garden in VP tea and cleared a similar area of old tea abutting the front of the PD's garden and established a vegetable garden there.

I had employed a new driver for the car and Land Rover, an ex army man who proved to be a disaster where driving was concerned as he was petrified at the wheel of a vehicle. I do not think I had asked to see his license but I did go on a trial run with him. He was nervous then, but I assumed that that was because of the circumstances of the moment - very silly! One night I was advised of a disturbance in the lines where the PD's driver's quarters were, the cause of the disturbance being the driver, so I went down to investigate. There was the driver, and he was very drunk. Anyway, matters were resolved for the moment and the driver was sacked then or soon after.

I had a very unusual experience once. One morning in front of my garage I was talking to my building contractor who was accompanied by an old man, one of his employees, when the old man just crumbled vertically in a heap - he had died standing up without a hint of what was to come!

The new SD's bungalow and garden were nearing completion when I was advised of my move to Dewalakande. The entrance hall in the PD's bungalow was too small for the excellent chesterfield suite that was there so I had bought a smaller cane and foam suite for the hall and allocated the chesterfield suite for the new bungalow. During my handing over, or perhaps soon after I had left, the SD told me that the new PD wanted to keep the suite I had earmarked for the new bungalow and substitute that which I had bought and put in the PD's entrance hall. I felt that, if this was so, it was not a nice thing to do so I told the SD that if the new PD tried to do this he should tell me and that I would ensure that it did not happen. Not long after, when I came up for the house-warming party, the furniture was where it was meant to be and there was no mention of the problem.

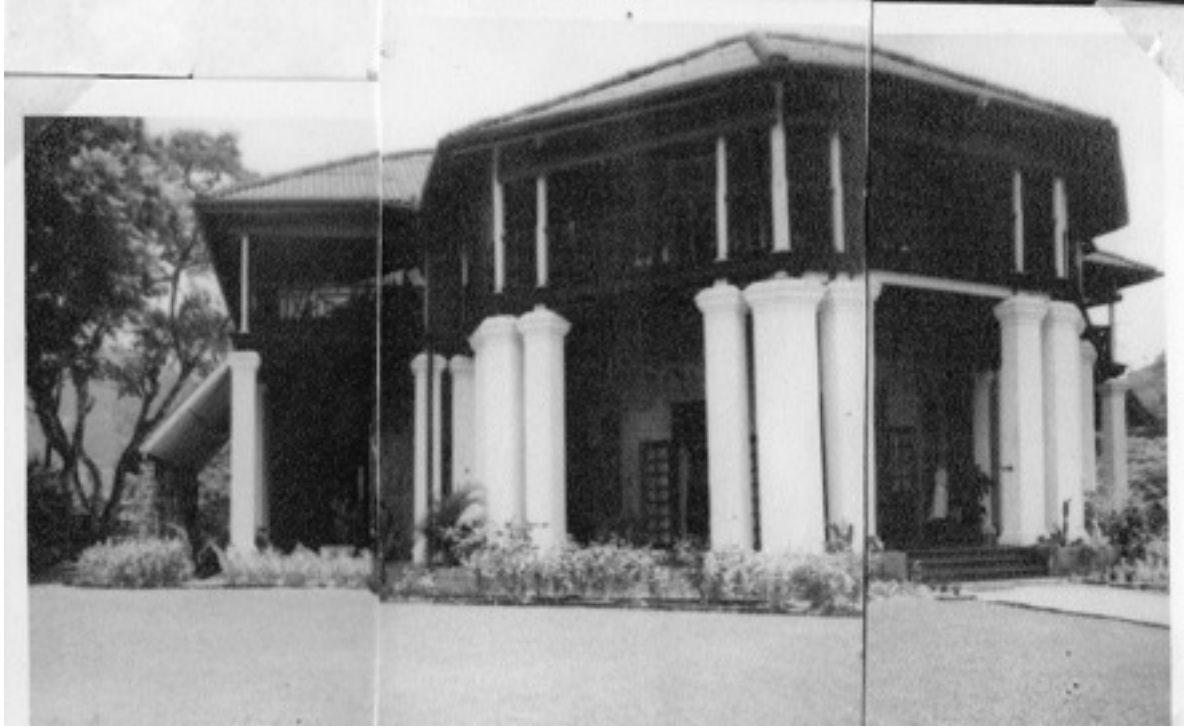
⁴⁹ My second strike since the one-day one on West Holyrood.

DEWALAKANDE 1842 acres

Dewalakande + Dunedin [The C.T.P. Co., Ltd.] = 1387 acres

+ Troy [The C.P.T.E.Co., Ltd.] = 455 acres

Jun. 1966/Sept. 1969



Dewalakande Managers' bungalow c.1968.



Dewalakande Managers' bungalow garden on right of driveway c.1968.



Dewalakande main factory c.1968.

Dewalakande was one of the senior appointments in the CTP and why I was given it I do not know. My attitude regarding transfers had been, and remained, that picking and choosing was contrary to duty and responsibility so I accepted the post even though my feelings for tea planting were the direct opposite of my feelings for rubber planting. As it happened, there was some material as well as moral compensation for this as, not long afterwards, I received a 25% increase in salary out of the blue and without explanation. Perhaps all PDs got the same but, if they did, I never heard it said.

Since I was last on Dewalakande Humbaswalana had been sold and the SD on Troy replaced by a Conductor who, I was to find, was extremely capable and loyal. The plantation was in excellent condition and the factory a showpiece. In fact, the plantation was famous for its sole crepe and visited by local and overseas people interested in the manufacture of this product.

SDs and Conductors were provided with motorcycles and the PD had a Land Rover as well as a sleek Wolsley 4/40. During my stint the floor of the Wolsley was found to be rusty and, because import restrictions precluded the purchase of a new vehicle, this had to be remedied by a local panel beater. Since the restrictions on imports imposed by the Government car mechanics island wide had demonstrated exceptional skills in the maintenance of vehicles, and this skill was evident in the finesse with which the floor of this car was renewed.

I took over from the man who was my PD some ten years before.

I had been told by GS that the retiring PD had wanted the SD on Dunedin sacked but that they had insisted that the question of dismissal or otherwise be left to me. There seemed to me to be something left unsaid in this regard but that was immaterial as far as I was concerned and, as soon as convenient, I invited the SD concerned to drinks and we talked about this. From this and other discussions, and my knowledge of my predecessor, I concluded that, for various reasons, the cause of the problem was that my predecessor had taken a personal dislike to this SD, and that his treatment of the SD undermined the SD's authority at work, his self-esteem and his self-confidence. It was obvious that he needed long term nurture to turn all this around. This I gave him and he proved himself well. Perhaps, the following illustrates the point.

I discovered later that he was staying out for whole nights without having told me that he would be doing so, and at times even returning for work late in the morning. For instance, having decided one day to do a Dunedin round I arrived at his bungalow only to be told by his servant that he gone out the previous evening and not yet returned. I summoned him to my office and found that the secondary cause was a girl in Colombo - the primary cause being lack of responsibility. After a long discussion and advice I told him that if this happened again I would sack him and he assured me that he would not do these things again. Then one day he came to me in the office and, saying that he had dishonoured his assurance to me and was, therefore, resigning, he handed me a letter. I took it, and read it, and told him that there were other ways to deal with this, but he insisted; so I opened the safe, put the letter inside, and said, 'I will close the safe very slowly. When the door shuts, that's it.' Facing the safe, I closed it very slowly, and at the very last second he said, 'I

take it back, Sir.⁵⁰ He had not sat down so I asked him to sit and said that I had something for him more difficult than resigning. He asked me what it was and I told him. I said, 'You are gated for three months.' He was taken aback, thought seriously, and then said, 'On one condition, Sir.' I dismissed a fleeting urge to tell him that it was not for him to place conditions on me, and asked him what it was; and he replied, 'That at the end of three months when I have a celebratory party you come to it.' I gave him that guarantee.

The punishment of gating had long since disappeared, and a few PDs meeting me at the club expressed the opinion that I was being too harsh but, reminded that it was far preferable to losing a job, had nothing to say. Besides, they did not know how I treated my SDs. However, after a month during which he had stuck to the bargain, I considered the point to have been made and released him. He had his party and I attended! There was no more trouble with him.

The SDs quite frequently came to my bungalow for drinks and I once asked them why they did not ride to the front of the bungalow instead of parking by the garage (which was quite a way away at the end of the garden) and they said that with the previous PD they were not allowed to ride to the front.

Dewalakande had a new PD's office. It was a splendid affair situated between the factory and the end of the bungalow garden. The previous office had been put to factory use and the previous SD's office was now at the front end of a new store sited between the PD's office and the factory. The office had two large rooms, a storeroom and a toilet and washroom for the staff. One of the main rooms was for the HC and his four or five clerks plus a part-timer, and one for the PD (the staff referred to him as Manager.). There was a telephone switchboard for at least five telephones. Late in 1967 or so, a blind man came to the office and asked me for some money. I refused this but wanted to help him. I realised that we were at that time making thousands of wire cup holders for putting around the trees to hold the coconut shells in which the latex collected after tapping. These were made by bending wire around an arrangement of nails on a board so I explained this to him and he said that he could do it. We agreed on a piece rate and the job was his. Thinking further about this I realised that my clerks had to get up every so often to work the telephone switchboard, that this was not conducive to good work and that the blind were often trained to operate switchboards. I asked Claude (let's call him that) about this and he said that he was a trained telephonist. I asked him how he managed without access to a telephone directory and he said he remembered every number he used. Before I offered him the job there was the question of how to pay him as I did not feel that I could legitimately charge him in the books, so I put a proposal to my clerks and some other staff members which was that, if I paid half of Claude's salary would they chip in to pay the other half. They agreed, and after he had finished the cup holders Claude started as telephonist and proved to be a boon to all. When the Estimates were next done I included a telephonist, explaining the benefits the trial had demonstrated and it was passed without comment. All this because I was unwilling to give him money!

Troy, though run as part of the group, was owned by The Ceylon Proprietary Tea Estates Co. and had a separate set of accounts. Estimates, reports etc. too were separate. Its annual production was apportioned according to a formula applied to the group's production in each year - about 2 million pounds.

Problems of staff attitude and discipline that existed in the past were nonexistent.

One of the first to pay me a visit of welcome at the office was the Thalaivar, Sivaperumal, who had been Thalaivar when I was last there. He arrived with a beaming smile on his face, yet very respectfully, and I was happy to see him, as I was to see all my old friends. Some, like the old Conductor, had retired or died.

In the Dewalakande factory were the RM, Asst. RM and one or two junior RMs while some of the girls were just as beautiful as before, although beauty and/or sexual favours would no longer be criteria of employment. The RM of my SD days was still the RM and I had been concerned about his possible state of mind since he heard of my transfer to Dewalakande. I wasted no time in calling him to the office and assuring him that I was not one to carry a grudge and that, as far as I was concerned, the past was the past and he had nothing to fear from me. A very relieved RM left the office. However, I found out that he still had power far in excess of his position. He still virtually had the power of hire and fire over those who worked in his factory - something that I felt should only reside in the hands of the PD. Even where an SD made a decision of dismissal the final say should be with the PD. The sexual exploitation of female workers was also, apparently, still in existence. It was also commonly stated on the plantation and in the club that he had been procurer for friends of the last PD, and organized girls to be transported to various rest houses for hunting parties etc. My first step in putting a stop to this sort of thing was to put the Dewalakande SD in overall charge of factory labour, but without interfering with the day-to-day running of the factory. The RM was excellent as a maker of a top quality product and I wanted to do nothing to interfere with that.

⁵⁰ Both SDs were young and, for their sake, it was too early for me to tell them that I preferred to be called Ian.

Compared to the manufacture of tea, which had both chemical and mechanical components and where the harvesting had a bearing on the final product, that of rubber was relatively straightforward in that it was essentially mechanical. The only chemical aspect was the addition of acid at the start to cause coagulation and, in the field, the only thing that affected manufacture was rain which caused contamination of the latex as well as dilution.

The following, relative to the factory, covers the whole period of my stay on Dewalakande for ease of narration and reading.

As mentioned relative to Ingoya, in rubber the whiter the end product the higher the price, and more so with sole crepe. Soon after my arrival it seemed to me that the colour of the rubber was not as white as it was when I was there before. I put this to the Forbes & Walker buyer/broker who handled our rubber, and had once been an SD on the group, and he told me that he too had had the same impression. He thought it was due to the advent of clonal rubber into the mix. Much later, I was going round the factory with the RM when I noticed a sheet of sole crepe with a dark splotch in it, and there were a few more sheets thus affected. The RM said that it must be a tadpole and was surprisingly accepting of this. I pointed out that there was a filter system at the river from where the water was pumped and told him to call the mechanic to accompany us to the river. As a matter of interest, the factory used 4500 gallons of water per hour.

The filter system consisted of a twenty or twenty-five foot concrete groin set into the river and filled with river stones decreasing in size from the bottom up. This led to a small tank from which a pump extracted the water. When this tank was opened there was a two-foot monitor lizard in it - so much for filtration! The groin was in need of repair and the stones in it renewed. I took samples of the water from the supply at the factory and sent them off to be analysed, and was not surprised at the results that came back. For the various contaminants reported that were relevant to us the readings were 200 - 300 times the allowable figure. I made enquiries about filtration pumps and possible alternatives but was running out of time because the window of opportunity was the month of January when the rubber trees shed their leaves, latex flow ceased and, in turn, manufacture. This was the time when factories carried out all their manufacturing machinery maintenance and that of anything vital to manufacture that could not be done when the factory was working. It was also the driest time of the year and the river at its lowest for the year. We were into, or almost into, January and there was no time to get involved in high cost capital items, company approval etc., so I bought three twenty to thirty foot lengths of 9" PVC piping, had them drilled with $\frac{3}{4}$ " holes, had teak bungs made for one end of each secured with brass screws (no PVC end pieces were available), had a new pump feed tank built, moved the sand in the river bed⁵¹ out of the way, laid the three PVC pipes like the radii of a circle with the centre ends in the new tank where they were concreted in, put river stones around the pipes, followed by smaller and smaller ones and, when that was done, covered everything with the river sand and levelled the river bed. When we tried it a few days later it worked perfectly - we had clean water!

When the January accounts went to GS there was no money left in the item "Water Supply" and they wrote to me saying, 'We are indeed surprised that you have used up the whole year's estimate under "Water Supply" etc.' I replied telling them what had happened, the circumstances in which I found myself, that a decision had to be made and that I, as Manager, made it. The response from the Board was, 'Tell Mr. Gardner that, should he need further funds under "Water Supply" during the year he is to ask.'

Again, in the factory one day, The RM and I were at one end of the factory and at the other end I noticed a young woman walking gingerly on the wet floor with a roll of "lace" on her head. She slipped and nearly fell, and I said to the RM, 'That is dangerous!' and he replied, 'It has always been like that Sir' To this my response was, 'Well, it won't be any longer! Within a week I want a suitable rubber carpet laid along the length of the wet area.' It was done.

On another occasion we were walking past a roller. Because these rollers work at high pressure their bearings get very hot and are, therefore, cooled by a constant flow of water in a gland around them. I noticed that there was only a trickle of water coming out of the glands of the roller and pointed this out to him and queried him. He said that the pipes were rusty and many rollers were like that so I told him that the next morning I wanted to check a pipe and to organize it. It is relevant to mention that all the pipes in the factory were colour coded in pink and blue and yellow etc. to facilitate the tracking of a pipe from its end point to its source - a very good idea and it looked good too. On checking the pipe the next day I discovered that, instead of being two inches in diameter inside, it was about half an inch, and subsequent checks of the other pipes revealed the same acute problem. For the next year, therefore, all expenditure on keeping the factory

⁵¹ A large stream with a normal flow of about 15 m across.

beautiful was eliminated and funds provided for the replacement of all the old piping with PVC piping. Colour coding was left for later.

A firm of auditors visited the Companies' plantations without notice, this for obvious reasons, and caused fear in the hearts of the clerks and some PDs too. During this period of mine they visited Dewalakande and there was nothing adverse to report, but they did want me to do some things that I felt were all right in theory but unacceptable in practice because they interfered with the smooth administration of the plantation. These I told them I would not implement. On Alton or Radella similar demands were made and my response was the same. On no occasion was I required to alter this decision.

An SD on another CTP plantation, a friend of mine, was having problems with his PD and, to help him out, I spoke to the CTP Director in GS saying that I was willing to take him as one of my SDs. He asked me whether I could control the individual and I said that if I could not, no one could. He was, therefore, transferred to Dewalakande and I put him on Dewalakande division where, to my mind the senior SD should be, and later had to move him to Dunedin and the Dunedin SD to Dewalakande. The SD who had been on Dewalakande division to that time had done a good job in his quiet way.

When it fell due my report on my new SD was not a good one for varied and numerous reasons - I was wearing my PD's hat for that and never had difficulty in keeping one hat on the rack when the other was on my head. Soon I heard that this SD was travelling around the planting districts saying all sorts of nasty things about me but that was not my problem. One friend of mine who was told these things told me that he had said, 'That if not the Ian I know.' I also heard that the SD had submitted to the GS CTP Director, then Chairman of GS, a list of some twenty "malpractices" for which, he claimed, I was responsible. I went to see the Chairman and asked whether what I had heard was true and he said that it was and pointed to the bottom draw of his desk and said, 'Ian, as you know I am leaving in a couple of months. When I go, this gets destroyed'. I said, 'I want an enquiry held into this, if I am guilty you sack me, and if he is wrong you sack him.' And his rather curious reply was, 'We do not believe in holding enquiries into our Superintendents.' I too was leaving in a couple of months and could not be bothered with this. Reading between the lines of a recently published book by a later Chairman of GS, it appears that Mr. Brookes wanted this SD sacked but was talked out of it by GS.

The Dunedin factory was the Cinderella of the two factories because it made low quality brown rubber and, unlike Cinderella, it stank to high heaven. There was not much to do here and it ticked over well enough with the SD, an RM and an Asst.RM.

The Dunedin SD's bungalow, a one time PD's bungalow, was a big one with three bedrooms, and because of this was allocated an extra servant on plantation account. I designed alterations to its plan to make it smaller and with one less bedroom and effected these alterations whilst at the same time removing the cost the extra servant allowed. I added a room to the Dewalakande SD's bungalow, that being the senior SD's and a senior SD being more likely to be married. The Dunedin changes were effected officially via the Estimates and the Dewalakande ones through the sack account properly kept by the HC and stored in my safe.

To get to Troy and Dunedin from Dewalakande one had to travel on the main road. This road, just off the lower boundary of Dewalakande, used to flood very easily and the villagers living close by had a way of making a few rupees out of this. At one time a train ran along the lower boundary of the plantation and after it was dismantled the path it took remained as a rough earth road that could be used as a bypass, provided that the flood was not over a certain height, if not for one bridge of which only the frame remained. The villagers would produce sturdy planks that they would place on the bridge in two lines and guide vehicles over at a price - a small one. One morning I had gone over to Dunedin and it poured with rain so much that when I tried to return home it was impossible as the water was over the bypass as well. Expecting the rain to stop and the water to subside as was usual, I returned to Dunedin where, incidentally, work had stopped because of the rain, and was given the hospitality of the SD. The rain did not stop and I spent two days and a night with my SD, marooned on Dunedin. We drank and played poker for most of the time in the company of neighbouring planters who were confined to their plantations but could come over the hill to Dunedin.

Because the estate vehicles did a lot of running to and from Troy and Dunedin, I decided to shorten the distance a little by opening a short section of road from near the rear of Dewalakande factory to the main road. The gate, a hinged bar, at this new entrance was to be kept locked at night. When I was an SD on Dewalakande division I would have liked to have had a way of getting in and out of the division in my car without having to pass the PD's bungalow. (To get to the SD's bungalow one had to cross the cattle grid at the main entrance below the PD's bungalow, drive up the rising road with a hairpin bend below the PD's bungalow, continue climbing just below the PD's bungalow and, having passed the factory gate, drive along a flat stretch on the hill across from the other side of the PD's bungalow - no chance of sneaking back in the

wee hours!) There was a field road from half way up the road to the SD's bungalow to a cart road that lead, via the other side of the hill from the PD's bungalow, to the factory and, therefore, past the new exit road. Now, as PD, I converted that field road into a motorcycle road leading to the new road that had been created behind the factory. The new SD appreciated this.

Labour disputes on the group were minimal. In fact, I cannot remember any but I do remember one occasion when I attended a meeting, accompanied by my two early SDs and the CEEF adviser, with district representatives of a union. In addition to the regular workforce, the group had a significant number of casual workers, with those on Dewalakande itself numbering in the hundreds at times. Some months after the new SD arrived we began to have a progressive decline in the number of these workers and, on many occasions, I spoke to him about this in an attempt to ascertain the cause and his explanation was that there was an exodus to the Ratnapura area where there had been a new gem strike. I accepted this explanation but there was a certain disquiet in me as it somehow did not fit with my knowledge of my workers. I believed in the principle that one should trust one's SDs, and staff for that matter, as a prerequisite to maintaining a sound management team - trusting, that is, until and if that trust proved to be misplaced. We had almost reached an acutely critical labour shortage when, driving on a field round on a village road, I came across one of my casual workers. I enquired as to why he was not at work and he explained that the SD was driving them too hard, demanding of them "tasks" that they could not sustain. Sadly, I trusted this man's version more than I trusted that put forward by my SD, and pieces of information I had been picking up on the plantation and in the club started to form an unpleasant and unsatisfactory picture. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, I transferred the SD to Dunedin and the situation on Dewalakande returned to normal within days.

One day this SD reported to me that the Dewalakande RM had abused him verbally. This abuse, which I cannot recall, amounted to a serious breach of discipline. I asked the RM whether he had spoken to the SD as the SD had reported and he said that he had, so I told him that he was suspended from duty without pay pending an enquiry, and that if the conclusions of the enquiry warranted it he would be paid his lost salary. Later that day, I was informed by some of my staff that there was to be a strike of all monthly paid staff from midnight that day and that, although many did not support it they had no option but to support it due to intimidation. Perhaps by phone, the Conductor on Troy told me that he going to work despite the threats as he did not agree with the strike.

I called a meeting of my SDs and the Troy Conductor for that afternoon and, when they had sat down, I said, 'I am going to run this place without staff. Each of you run your own division; you, go and organize lorries and drivers from Abilinu (our transport agent); you, run your factory; I will run this factory and the office.' I told all the leading hands in the main factory, 'I don't know much about manufacture here so I want all of you to do what you know well and keep up the high standards. If, when the rubber is sold, we do not suffer a reduction in price, I will pay each one of you a months pay as a bonus.' I called Sivaperumal, the Thalaivar, and said to him, 'You know what is happening, I am going to run this estate without supervision, but if there is even a hint of bludging or bad work I will close the whole place down!' He said, 'Dorai, we will work well, and if we have to carry the latex for five miles we will do so!' Later, during the strike, he came to me and asked if I wanted his people to go up the hill above the senior staff quarters at night and stone their houses. I answered that that was unnecessary and that they would probably end up in prison, which was not a good prospect.

No doubt I phoned GS and told them what was happening, and that I was not going to shut down work.

Next morning, the factory workers sent me a message that they could not get into the factory because the RM refused to give them the keys. So I went to the factory where the sixty-five or so workers were gathered - this was now high drama! - and sent a messenger to the RM, whose house over-looked the front door of the factory, with a note stating that the keys were the property of the Company and that he was to send them to me. He declined. I then walked up to the front door of the factory, smashed the glass with my stick, and let the workers in. The smashing of the door pane was dramatic for effect, not necessity!

With help from my wife I spent long hours in the office, and I kept an eye on the work in the factory and whatever else was going on in the immediate vicinity. I remember sitting outside the factory with an SD or two, enjoying dinner and a drink brought to us by my wife. Everything ran like clockwork except the office where we were restricted to the basics by time, ability and numbers. Meanwhile, the staff on all the CTP estates joined the strike but I heard, somehow, that Mr. Pillai, once on Dewalakande and Forres and now probably somewhere else, had expressed the opinion that I would not have acted against my RM as I had without good reason.

The strike continued for over a month and, on Dewalakande, all those working were pretty relaxed about the whole event but, at one point, I got a phone call from my friend, the PD on Somerset, who opened

the conversation with a joking, 'You bastard, **you** cause this strike and then run your place while all of us are shut down!' He was once SD on Troy and we chatted about what was going on.

One morning I heard that some union officials had surreptitiously driven into the estate during the previous night and that the workers and watchmen had blocked their progress, at one place with barrels, in the three possible directions by which they could escape and held them there for some hours before letting them leave the property. They had tried to enter at night by the main gate before but had not been allowed past the factory by the watchman.

When the strike was called off Dewalakande had not lost a single pound of rubber nor suffered any loss in prices and, as far as I became aware, there had been no loss of quality in the work in the field. The C.E.S.U.⁵² took legal action against the Company but the case had not been heard by the time I left the country for good.

The PD's bungalow was not, strictly speaking, a bungalow because it was a two storied affair. It was very big, though with only three bedrooms. When I arrived, there was a double garage at the end of the big garden past the old tennis court, now a lawn, so I later created a driveway around the outer perimeter of this lawn to the back of the house where I turned an unused, large room into a garage for the car. In heavy rain, of which there was plenty during the two monsoons, this was a blessing. The double garage was left for the Land Rover and visitor's cars. Upstairs, outside what we used as the master bedroom, I had a section of the eight-foot verandah, which surrounded three sides of the front half of the house, enclosed with glass louvres on the outside as an office. This had a pleasant outlook onto the garden. There was also the "serious" problem concerning the downstairs bathroom, situated directly below one upstairs, servicing the bedroom usually used by guests and visiting VIPs. The problem, which I discovered by chance one day much to my dismay, was that, although the upstairs bathroom had a thick concrete floor, the sound of any activity in the toilet was clearly audible below! Of course, this had to be rectified so I had a false ceiling installed downstairs. The house had not been rewired in a long time and I decided to include this in the next years Estimates whilst at the same time disposing of the unsightly timber casings of the wiring and putting the new wiring into the walls, and then repainting the internal walls. Included in this project was the installation of yellow bulkhead lights around three sides of the house, halfway up, to deter the myriad of mosquitoes and insects.

I also decided to estimate for air conditioning in the main office. It was often extremely uncomfortable, with temperatures in the high nineties and humidity almost as high. One could not really expect clerks to work efficiently in such conditions and sweaty arms could cause smudging of the ink on books if care was not taken to avoid this - another inconvenience for them. The VA's office on Moraliya was a spartan affair that did not even boast paint on the walls but whitewash and was, therefore, in sharp contrast to the Dewalakande one. He and I had played rugby together in 1955 and we got on well socially, as well as where work was concerned. On his visit at the time it was hot but, on the subject of air conditioning the office, perhaps the first time on any estate in the country, he said, 'Why do you want air conditioning? It is cool enough in here.' And I said, 'Ah! But I have had my garden coolie sitting up on the roof with a hose for some hours and he is still up there!' We went out to have a look and there was the gardener with a broad grin on his face. Anyway, my Estimates were approved by GS and the Board unaltered, although I left before the new financial year.

At one time I decided to have a party for my staff, at my expense, and the SDs were to be there too. At, or soon after, the appointed time in the afternoon they started arriving, the married ones with their wives, the Land Rover transporting those from Troy and Dunedin. As was to be expected, they were rather formal and stiff as this was an unusual experience. However, after a couple of drinks things got freed up at least where the men were concerned - the women did not drink. After more drinks some were getting quite jolly, particularly the Dewalakande RM who was becoming a serious embarrassment to his wife! Soon, when he started falling about the place he was removed via the Land Rover, much to the merriment of the others. In the end a good time was had by all, and had I remained in the country I would have made this an annual event.

The HC was a meek and respectful person who, according to the tradition of the Company, had been promoted according to seniority, as had been the case with the executive staff. This may appear to be a fair practice but it sometimes resulted in someone moving beyond his ability and being out of his depth. The Dewalakande office, in terms of staff numbers, would have been amongst the top three in the Company and I was to find him wanting in many respects. For one, he lacked control of his staff - I often found, when I turned up unexpectedly, that, except for him, they were playing around instead of working and, as time went

⁵² The Ceylon Estates Staff Union.

by I had to pull him up over many things. In the end I took him to my bungalow after work one evening and had a long talk with him. I suggested to him that I would arrange for him to go to a smaller plantation with no loss of salary, but he refused. He was a quiet man who never said much but he was quietly adamant. I went to the C.E.E.F. for advice and was told that I needed to build up a case for dismissal by writing to him each time he made a mistake. I thought that this approach would only make things worse, particularly because of the nature of the man - and it did. There was no resolution to this at the time I left.

The entrance to Dewalakande was set back about forty yards from the main road and formed a very wide funnel from the main road to the entrance. On one side of this was a villager's house and, at one time, at night he used to park a dark green ten-ton lorry outside his house on the side of, but within, the funnel. As this was dangerous in the dark, I sent two messages via my watchmen to him telling him not to park there but he persisted. Then, one night, I was coming back from somewhere after midnight and the lorry was parked in the usual place, so I went up to the bungalow, found about fourteen four-inch nails, free wheeled the Land Rover down and stopped it above the cattle grid at the entrance. I then crept up to the lorry and carefully placed the nails at various strategic points under the tyres, returned to the Land Rover and freewheeled out on to the main road for some distance where I started the engine, turned back, and made a pretence of returning to the plantation for the first time. The lorry was never parked there again.

The Firestone rubber plantation in Liberia was 200,000 acres and had its own airstrip. The executive structure started, at the bottom, with what they called Supervisors running the agricultural aspects of, I think, 40,000 acres each. The other aspects, such as administration and manufacture, were probably centralised and in charge of more senior executives. One of the Supervisors was sent to Dewalakande for a few days to learn what he could. It was when talking to him that the seeds of our leaving Ceylon were sown and I even briefly contemplated trying to get a job with Firestone in Liberia. It was good that I did not take the matter any further because, within a couple of years, Firestone had pulled out of Liberia. By this time the prospect of nationalisation of the plantations in Ceylon did not seem far away - I gave it five years but it happened in half that time. I was one for whom the mere running of a plantation was not interesting enough; I needed the added impetus of new roads, buildings, machinery, methods of manufacture, agricultural science etc. and I knew that nationalisation would not provide these. I also thought that, at any time, the CTP might put its Ceylon plantations on a care and maintenance basis pending nationalisation; it had already been investing heavily in Kenya. Furthermore, the Government had made Sinhalese the language of education and I saw problems for my daughter if she studied in Sinhalese and then went overseas to advance her education. Then there was the question of salary which was expected to fall dramatically under nationalisation, especially as we were seen as overpaid and under worked. All this crystallized into a decision to give up planting and leave for Australia before I got too old to start again there.

The Government's foreign currency restrictions meant that when emigrating from the country my family was only allowed £325. As a means of raising a few more dollars in Australia I hit upon the idea of crating the few possessions we were taking in a crate made of mahogany and selling the wood in Australia. There were two large mahogany trees growing together in the garden of the Dunedin bungalow so, much to the dismay of my SD there, and some heartache on my part, I had one cut down and sawn into planks. These were charged to stock and then bought from stock by me at cost. I supplied the planks to the firm shipping my goods with clear instructions to put nails and screws into only the last few inches of the planks so as to minimize their loss in value but, when we reached Australia, I found that they had put the screws and nails more than a foot from the ends and, as a result, I was not able to sell them.

At some time during this stint on Dewalakande I realised that it was possible that I would be offered rubber VAing. I did not think that I was qualified, but the prestige of the plantation made it a possibility though not a probability. That was not the point, however; the point was that the thought occurred to me that I would have to spend too much time away from home and the plantation and, in any case, the extra income would take me into the 95% tax bracket. I decided that I would turn down any offer if one were made. I do not know whether my decision would have been different had I been on tea and an offer was to do with tea. Not this time, nor on Radella, did the kudos associated with being a VA have any attraction for me.

From February to May 1967 I was away on furlough in London and the Isle of Man and left Dewalakande for Australia in August 1969. The Company not only paid for the passages of myself, my wife, and my child to Australia but also paid me an ex gratia payment of Rs 5000. Both the Board and GS thanked me and said that I would be missed. It had been an honour and a privilege to work for the CTP and a great pleasure to deal with the CTP Director, his Assistant and the "tea" Director at GS & Co.