

the Saint Andrew

Newsletter



ISSUE NO.05

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

 SAINT
ANDREW'S
SCOTS KIRK
COLOMBO SRI LANKA



CONTENTS

PAGE

Minister's Letter

02

The Enduring Story of Bethlehem

03

Silent Night

04

Christmas Around The World

05

Christmas Near And Far

07

When The Gates Lifted Up

09

Newsletter Comments

09

r & Far

The Scotsman Who Changed The Course Of Tea!

10

Double Celebration At Netherlee Cottage

11

Rev.Roderick Felicitated By Kollupitiya Police

11

The Annual Bazaar

12

Interview with Robyn Mudie (Australian High Commissioner)

13

Restoration of the Leaded Glass Windows in St Andrew's Scots Kirk

15





Minister's Letter



Dear Friends,

This coming Christmas for Sue and myself brings with it a real box of mixed emotions. Over-riding everything is the expectation, the preparation of the celebration of the birth of Jesus. Then the realisation we will celebrate that in a new situation and with different people. So there is another level of emotion, great sadness at our leaving. However be assured, other than the tensions, to which I will not refer again, we have both thoroughly enjoyed our time in Sri Lanka. We have been met with great kindness and warm hospitality, and we have made friends whose friendship will continue into the future. To all who have made us welcome and given us of themselves, we would together say thank you.

I remember the first Christmas I spent in Kenya in 1975. I had been asked to take a primary school service and duly turned up at the appointed time. The pupils were gathered in the open air, under a blazing African sun and began to sing 'In the bleak mid-winter, frosty winds made moan, earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.' The incongruity of time place and carol words struck me forcibly. I have never forgotten that lesson that what may be true in one time and place may not be true in another.

What is however universally true is that God's revelation in Jesus Christ, which we celebrate in our own ways at Christmas, should bind us and the whole church, prior to binding the whole earth in one great band of love. We should not individualise Christmas too much, we need to open our hearts and our doors. A stable door was opened and there amid the life giving animals the Prince of Peace was born.

I can never get over the wonder of this birth and its meaning for us all. That wonderful name 'Emmanuel' is given to Jesus, 'God is with us'. What too many fail to grasp is the truth that, if God is with Jesus by virtue of his creation and birth, that same God is with and in each of us by virtue of our creation and birth. Christmas gives us the opportunity to recognise the Eternal with our own being and also to recognise the Eternal in each other.

Love begins with the recognition we have come from God, and the doorway to love is thrown wide open. As Bonhoeffer put it, 'love means being there for others.' A New Year awaits us all. None know what it will bring. If however we can keep the Christ light of Christmas burning in our hearts and through our open doors, who knows what will be revealed to us in loving. As someone has said, 'the more you love, the greater your capacity to love becomes'.

Blessings on each and all of you this Christmas time and as the New Year breaks upon us, put your hand in the hand of him who stands in the door of the future, for as he has been faithful in the past so he will be in the future.

Grace mercy and peace, from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Bless, preserve and keep you, now and always,

Your friends and Minister, Roderick and Sue



THE ENDURING STORY OF BETHLEHEM

Over two thousand years on, despite being battered and torn due to various conflicts even as we read this, the little town of Bethlehem continues to be central to a tale that's remains a cause for celebration in even the remotest parts of the



Church of the Nativity Altar

world. It's one of wonder, joy and hope; wonder because the birth of an infant in a lowly manger changed the course of the world, joy because that change impacted every human being on earth and hope because that birth instilled the concepts of love and peace into a world of eternal life.

Visiting Jerusalem can be overwhelming, in meaning and significance. The events before Jesus' birth takes us to Mary's childhood

home, John the Baptist's birthplace, Joseph's carpentry shop and the home in which Jesus grew up with his brothers and sisters, where he learned the humble trade of a carpenter. And then there's the Church of the Visitation where Mary recited The Magnificat. The gardens of this church are adorned with tiled canticles of nearly all the world's languages, including Sinhalese and Tamil.

Venture into Shepherd's Field with its tiny tent-shaped limestone chapel designed by Italian architect Antonio Beduzzi. The paintings in the chapel relive that wintry night when the sleep-inebriated shepherds were awoken with heavenly messengers proclaiming Christ's birth, the shepherd's paying homage to Jesus and then celebrating the birth of the Messiah.

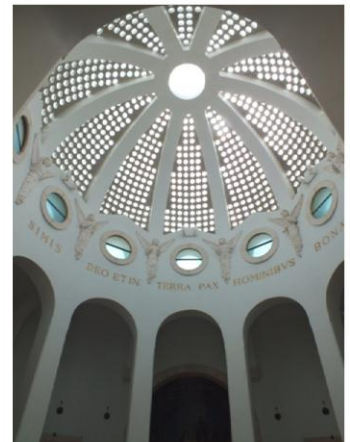
The site of the birth has come a long way since the time the humble stable stood, housing the somewhat overwhelmed parents looking fondly down at their new born babe. The Church of the Nativity is now a basilica in Bethlehem, originally commissioned by Costantine in 327AD. However, that original basilica was destroyed by a fire in the 6th century and subsequently, in 565AD, Byzantine Emperor Justinian restored the church, retaining its original tone including the prominent bell tower.

The Greek Orthodox influenced church is ornate, with its gold mosaics on the side walls, large gilded iconostasis, (a complex array of lamps) and wooden rafters donated by King Edward IV. It hosts at least 200,000 people daily who visit for spiritual upliftment. However, the inherent flavour of humility very much ingrained in Jesus' persona is retained, as the entrance is through a very low door labelled the Door of Humility.

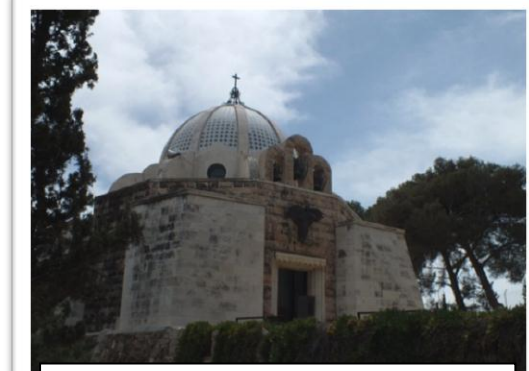
The crypt underneath the basilica, which is the Grotto of the Nativity is now an underground cave, accessed by a stairways placed on either side of the Sanctuary. The exact spot where the birth is believed to have taken place, is marked underneath the altar with a silver star set into the marble floor, illuminated by silver lamps.

And at Christmas, there's no better place than to spend Christmas Eve at Manger Square, the large paved courtyard in front of the church, joining the large crowd that gathers to sing Christmas Carols, the ideal mood-maker for the midnight mass to follow.

- Savithri Rodrigo



Shepherd's Field Chapel Dome



Shepherd's Field Chapel Bethlehem



Silent Night

By Joseph Mohr
(1792 – 1848)



A mouse was responsible for this carol in December 1818! It chewed a hole in the leather bellows of the church organ at Oberndorf, near Salzburg in Austria. On the following morning 24th December the organist slipped in early to practice the hymns for the midnight Mass that evening.

Franz Gruber was the school teacher in the neighbouring village of Arnsdorf, but on Sundays he played the organ at the Church of St Nikola at Oberndorf. He sat at the organ, nodded to the man who had to work the bellows to provide the air, checked his stops, threw his head back and allowed his fingers to hit the keys. To his surprise and dismay there was silence, not a sound. At that very moment the young assistant, Pastor Joseph Mohr, came through the door of the church. He realised there was something wrong and Gruber asked Mohr if he knew what was wrong with the organ.

“Yes” said Mohr, “come I will show you” and he led Gruber behind the pipes and up to the bellows. He pointed to a hole in the leather and a tear and, looking at the ground, he pointed at some mouse droppings. “What do we do” said Gruber, “there is too much snow on the ground and the organ mender will not come until the snows have melted in the spring. We need music tonight of all nights”.

The young priest Mohr was a bit of a rogue. He was known to meet with the farmers and the rivermen and join in their singing, which was not approved by the senior priest, so Gruber was surprised when Mohr suggested he might like to look at a poem he had written. “We could not possibly sing a song such as you sing with the men”.

“No” said Mohr, “it is not a song like that”. He handed it to Gruber, who began to read

*Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht
Alles schlaft: einsam wacht.*

“We could accompany it on the guitar, but that would cause all sorts of problems.” However, Gruber had an idea, he took the poem, realised this was really a lullaby, which needed a simple tune, and the music came to him, which we sing today.

Two friends produced this hymn and its music, they practised it that afternoon with the guitar and then decided to ask some of the school children to sing the chorus. So that Christmas Eve, instead of the organ, the young priest, the young organist and a group of twelve children sang “Still the Night! Holy the night” at Oberndorf,



*Still the night, holy the night!
Sleeps the world; hid from sight.
Mary and Joseph in stable bare
Watch o'er the child beloved and
fair,*

*Sleeping in heavenly rest
Sleeping in heavenly rest.*

*Still the night, holy the night!
Son of God, O how bright
Love is smiling from thy face!
Strikes for us now the hour of
grace,
Saviour since thou art born!*





Christmas Around the World

★ CHINA

Christians celebrate Sheng Dan Jieh or Holy Birth Festival decorating their homes with evergreens, posters and bright paper chains, putting up a 'Tree of Light' with beautiful lanterns, flowers and red paper chains to symbolize happiness. Red cut-out pagodas are pasted on windows, while houses are lit with paper lanterns.

Ethiopia

Following the ancient Julian calendar, Christmas or Ganna is celebrated on January 07th. Celebrated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, all wear white, most donning the traditional shamma which is the thin white cotton wrap. Twelve days after Ganna, a three day celebration, Timkat commemorates the baptism of Christ.

France

December 05th, St. Nicholas' Eve is when celebrations begin with church bells ringing and voices singing noels (carols), although Christmas Eve is the most special time. After church on Christmas day, families enjoy an abundant feast which includes buche de Noel, a rich buttercream-filled cake similar to a Yule log.

Germany

On the first Sunday of Advent, families make a fir or pine wreath with four candles, each of which is lit each Sunday, while singing Christmas songs and eating Christmas cookies. Baking is a big tradition in the lead up to Christmas, filling homes with the delightful aroma of sweet bread, cakes filled with candied fruit and lebkuchen (spicy cookies).

Netherlands

Sinterklaas is eagerly awaited by the children on December 06th, St. Nicholas' Day, wearing his red robe and pointed mitre. He travels by ship from Spain to Amsterdam each winter on his white horse carrying his huge sack of gifts. Great food, hot chocolate and a cake known as the letterbanket, which is shaped in the first letter of the family's last name takes pride of place in the family festivities.





Italy

Beginning on the first Sunday of Advent, Christmas markets and fairs are commonplace, with fireworks and bonfires lighting up the festivities. The manger scene, Presepio, is where families gather each morning or evening to light candles and pray.



Mexico

Families throng the puestos, the market stalls for goodies and gifts, decorating their homes with lilies and evergreens. Brown paper bags are cut into intricate designs and transformed into farolitos, which are lanterns into which a candle is placed inside and placed along sidewalks, windowsills, rooftops and outdoor walls.



Spain

The week long observance of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception starts off the Christmas season on December 08th. Churches are decorated with evergreens and tambourines, gourd rattles, castanets and miniature guitars are very popular items at Christmas markets, prompting the singing and dancing in the streets. Children go from house to house, caroling or reciting verses and are rewarded with sweets, toys or small instruments.



Sweden

St Lucia's Day on December 13th marks the beginning of festivities. The family's eldest daughter rises before dawn to wear a long white dress and a crown of leaves as the Queen of Light, resembling the Patron Saint of Light. Singing Santa Lucia, she goes to each bedroom in the home, serving coffee and treats to the family, with younger children helping her.



CHRISTMAS NEAR AND FAR

Given the diverse nationalities that worship at St. Andrew's each week, we asked some of our congregation to share their Christmases with us.

Jamaica's Cake, Sorrel and Reggae Carols



Jamaica is a tiny island state in the Caribbean Sea with a population of 2.7 million and a reputation that is disproportionately large relative to its size. The majority of its people are of mixed ancestry though they identify as black. Christianity is the predominant religion and as a result, Christmas is celebrated almost universally in Jamaica and is the most festive time of year.

From mid - December to early January, the island is buffeted by a cool Christmas breeze, the temperature goes down and the incidence of parties and celebration goes up. In addition to multiple school, corporate and association end of year events, families prepare for the visitors, who will be served Jamaican Christmas cake made from dried fruit soaked in rum and Sorrel, a drink made from the sorrel plant, sugar, ginger, pimento and rum.

Despite the heat, Santa Claus is an integral part of a Jamaican Christmas, as is gift giving and Christmas Carols many of which have been revamped into a reggae version. Church is also a significant part of the tradition with Midnight Mass by candlelight on Christmas Eve being a particularly popular in the Anglican Church. The service is preceded with a half hour of caroling and fellowship.

Families unite for Christmas dinner although timing depends on family traditions and could be on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and even on Boxing Day. Sorrel and Christmas Cake are staples as are Roast Ham and Gungo Rice and Peas. Gungo is a type of lentil that ripens in December and used in the traditional rice and peas dish. Any leftover peas flavoured with ham bones are used

after Christmas to make Gungo Pea Soup.

~ Rolande Pryce



Natal Across Indonesian Provinces

With about 25 million Indonesians, 10% of the total population of Indonesia being Christians, Christmas, locally known as Natal, is celebrated quite differently in various provinces. In my hometown of Medan in the North Sumatra Province, we Batakese attend service both on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. After the services, we spend time with our families until dawn, chatting and singing traditional songs. Extended families from various areas get together and it's a good time to catch up. We also have a tradition of sacrificing an animal on Christmas day called Marbinda. Generally, we all contribute towards the animal months before Christmas and hence, if it's many chipping in, it could be a buffalo but if it's a small number, it may be a pig. On Christmas day, basically pork becomes the symbol of our celebration.

In Jakarta, every year thousands of Jakarta's children wear Santa costumes and parade around the capital singing joyously.



The Javanese on the other hand have their own version of a Christmas tree built with simple things like paper, wood and recycled material. Their rituals are different too, blended in with traditional beliefs called Kajawen, retaining a degree of mystery.



The Christian ethnic community of Torajan celebrates singing traditional songs in their own dialects, wearing traditional dress to Church for the Christmas Eve celebrations, while in the North Sulawesi capital of Manado, the biggest Christmas tree in the country is showcased.



~Zakat Siregar

Christmas Unites Families in Nigeria

Christmas celebrations in Nigeria is a family event with preparations continuing throughout the year to ensure financial commitments are met. New clothes for children are a must. Cows, sheep, goats, turkeys and chickens are purchased and prepared for the family meal on Christmas Eve.

The Christmas meal is grand and includes rice, fried rice, jollof rice, pounded yams, Amala and stew. Every Christian family prepares ahead of Christmas, as homes and churches are cleaned and gain a new look to commemorate the birth of Christ. Christmas celebrations attract large crowds as people travel to their villages and towns from their cities to visit their loved ones, bearing gifts.

As Christmas approaches, churches will organize carols which will definitely be held on Christmas Eve and are filled to capacity and from that evening until Christmas morning, songs of praise will be sung with dances to commemorate this special day.

Celebrations are not complete without people exchanging food and gifts on Christmas afternoon and also visiting friends and family. There are lots of parties and fireworks. The different languages prevalent in Nigeria are well evident on Christmas day when people express their joy and happiness in their own languages. In Yoruba, we say, "E Ku Odun", in Ibo the words wishing each other is, "Kerisimas me yin oma" and in Hausa, we would wish by saying, "Bark de Kiribati".

— Peter O. Uwaife

Tuk-Tuks Proclaim Christmas in Jaffna

Celebrating Christmas in a multi-religious multi-ethnic community can be exciting and in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, it truly is one of celebration. Christmas is celebrated as a common festival for the remembrance of the birth of Christ, who was born and grew up in rural Bethlehem, leading a humble life among the fishermen of the village. Most people really believe that Christ is the one and only God who came to earth to sacrifice himself to forgive sin. Although on the other hand, the community is very strong in their traditions and forefathers' beliefs. But, each December, people in the Northern Province do go to church at Christmas. When I asked an elderly gentleman about how he celebrates Christmas, he said he goes to church only once a year and that's on Christmas Day. But who invites them? And how?

Churches in the Northern Province use very creative methods to invite people to church on Christmas Day. From the 21st to the 24th of December, Church members parade the streets of the villages together with Santa Claus, using loudspeakers assembled on tuk-tuks playing Christmas songs. Children and young people dance while the elders sing to the gathering public.

We give invitations and flyers to those gathered around, also encouraging them to bring children and friends to church on Christmas Day, as the celebrations include stalls, dramas, dances, musical bands and gifts.

This novel invitation method has become a tradition in and around the surrounds of Jaffna, which we call, 'Reaching the Unreached'

- Uruthirakumaran James



Mountain of God Gospel Church in Maraiadichakulam getting ready to celebrate the Christmas with all their villagers. The Church was built by me and my friends



WHEN THE GATES LIFTED UP

As the opening stanzas of *I'll walk with God* swathed the Sunday congregation at St Andrew's, the classically trained baritone Sanjeev Niles' mellifluous tones were wondrous to say the least. Accompanied by Director of Music Denham Pereira, who's prowess as a talented accompanist is renowned, next Sanjeev beautifully rendered Pietro Mascagni's *Ave Maria*, adapted to the Intermezzo from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Pure and precise, he may have even prompted Andrea Bocelli, who did attempt this complex piece (if in Church that day), to applaud.



Sanjeev who started singing when he was eight has been a constant soloist in the Colombo Philharmonic Choir and sung with The Merry An Singers and The Camerata. A bass voice, he trained under the expert tutelage of Mary Anne David, gaining the ability to sing on a much higher register, thus expanding his repertoire. This versatility pushed him to venture into his other passion, metal music, joining frontman of rock-metal band Stigmata Suresh De Silva, to release the original, *Cadence of Your Tears* and later on Stigmata's newly released album, *The Ascetic Paradox*.

Heading the local base of an European-owned software company and working on his own album to be launched at the end of the year, Sanjeev says, "God has given me a unique gift and I must make the most of it." That yearning to musically feed the mind, body and soul pushes Sanjeev to venture into complex musical journeys. Magnificent then was the inimitable combination of Stephen Adams' music and Frederick Weatherly's lyrics in the religious Victorian ballad, *The Holy City*. Leaving not a dry eye in the congregation, the spontaneous applause that burst forth on the last 'Hossana to your King' was well deserved.

Kudos also to visiting Minister, Rev. Ebenezer Joseph whose message urging the congregation to interpret and comprehend the Word in its whole and not in part, exemplified the story of the rich man who asked Jesus the path to eternal life. He articulated the smaller nuances within that story, prompting thought provoking discussion (which did ensue under the church porch later).

- Savithri Rodrigo

Newsletter Comments

We enjoyed reading the newsletter. Jane was born in Colombo and read the lesson many times at the church during the days of Andrew Baillie and his sister Martha. We still try to visit Sri Lanka every year and during our stay to visit the church. Best wishes to you all, Jane and Paul Sefcick.

~ Mr PA Sefcick

Thank you very much for forwarding the St. Andrews colourful newsletter which my aunt & I found very interesting. Congratulations to the editorial team for all the hard work. We were particularly interested in the historical background of the church, Netherlee Cottage & all the good work done there & Noel Wickramaratne's interview. Yes we will try to send some articles for future editions of the newsletter.

~ Lakshmi Senerviratne

Very interesting Newsletter.

~ Rev. Lokendra.



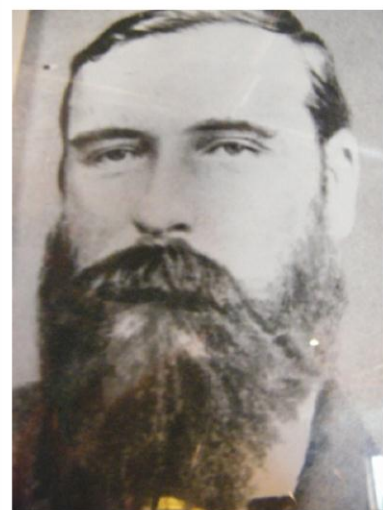
THE SCOTSMAN WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF TEA!

When Druid Getafix brewed that first cup of tea in his cauldron and that entire little village in Gaul drank of that magic brew, that little leaf gained celebrity status. But really, it was the British who decided that a little island in the Indian Ocean would be best to grow the world's best tea. While historic tomes recount that tea originated in China over 5,000 years ago, it was Ceylon that eventually became the tea empire. Initially, coffee was grown in Ceylon, but an unforeseen malady obviated the plantations and the British were left wringing their hands.



Enter Scotsman James Taylor, hailing from Kincardineshire, who lovingly nurtured his tea plants at Loolecondera Estate in the hills of Kandy in 1867. It was Taylor who launched the very first tea estate in the country, perfecting the unique technique of handcrafted plucking of the two leaves and a bud. (In fact Loolecondera is the Anglicised version of the words Lool Kandura in Sinhalese, which translates to a stream full of Loolla fish).

These 19 acres soon became a carpet of verdant green, dotted with colourfully garbed tea pluckers, deftly plucking the aromatic leaves which are then dried, rolled, graded and packaged. In 1872, Taylor established Ceylon's first tea factory, installing his latest invention of a leaf cutting machine and three years later, the very first shipment of Ceylon Tea made its way to the London Tea Auction. Having met millionaire Scotsman Thomas Lipton during a visit to Australia in the 1890s, they discussed tea export, which at that stage was a lowly 23 pounds, paving the way for Ceylon to become one of the world's largest tea exporters.



Lover's Leap Division Was The Only Estate Which Was Owned By Mr. James Taylor The Pioneer Tea Planter Who Started The Tea Planting Enterprise In Sri Lanka.

When He Planted 17 Acres Of Tea In 1867 In Loolecondera Estate Hewahata.

200 Tea Plants Were Planted In Naseby Division Of Pedro Estate In 1886.

This Is The Earliest Recorded Planting Tea In Sri Lanka.

Taylor's love for tea was so strong, that he lived at Loolecondera Estate until his death in 1892. He remains indelibly etched within this global industry, commemorated within the museum at Loolecondera.

Undoubtedly, the habit of the morning cuppa inextricably intertwines Scotland and Sri Lanka, adding flavour, warmth and undiluted doses of joy into the relationship the two countries enjoy!



DOUBLE CELEBRATIONS AT NETHERLEE COTTAGE



20 happy faces enjoyed short eats and birthday cake to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of Netherlee Cottage.

St Andrews Scots Kirk, Netherlee Cottage Project was started by members of the Kirk Session in 2005 as a rehabilitation Centre for Ladies from Mulleriyawa Mental Health Hospital.

The Ladies have been left at the hospital, their families do not wish to know them and even though many of them are now stable they do not have anywhere to go and they do not have any experience of living in our society. The aim of Netherlee Cottage is to make them ready for independent living.



St Andrews volunteers and the staff at Mulleriyawa Hospital had to learn how to select people from the hospital for the Netherlee Cottage opportunity and once that learning was put into practice we have improved the success rate to 67%. 67% of our Ladies have been successful to move onto to live and work in their own house.

We also enjoyed a second celebration on Sunday afternoon of 22nd November, a new television donated by the Caledonian Society of Sri Lanka. The Society also gave a donation for new curtains and to renovate the beds and wardrobes.

REV. RODERICK FELICITATED BY KOLLUPITIYA POLICE

Rev. Roderick Campbell was felicitated by the Kollupitiya Police in recognition for his work with the community, at a ceremony held at the Kollupitiya Police station. The ceremony was also attended by clergy of the church, temple and mosque in and around the area, with who he has been closely associated with in keeping the spirit of St. Andrew uplifted.



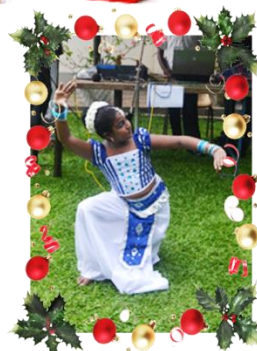
THE ANNUAL BAZAAR

The White Elephant stall overflowed with goodies and 90% of them were snapped –up by over 200 visitors to the bazaar. The cakes and short eats were all sold out and the Ginger Beer flowed faster than last year. St Andrews Hot Dogs with Onions and Sauce were a new speciality for the bazaar. Crafts, Cards and Jewellery from the Netherlee Cottage stall and a very busy Clothes Stall. The Hamper, 1st prize at the Raffle was carried away by one of our congregation pictured above and the voucher for 2 at the Taprobane Restaurant , Cinnamon Grand will be enjoyed by Chathuri and her husband.

Barry entertained us on his guitar and kept us well informed of all the attractions for the afternoon. James dance troupe quirky blend of character making, skill and athleticism from the very smallest to the biggest in the team drew a huge applause, the boys from the Netherlee Scout Troup showed the visitors a precision routine and a beautiful solo Kandyan dance.

Special thanks to our sponsors: Baur's for their donations of biscuits, Iced Tea , Cinnamon Drink and Muesli bars, Tea from Rehanya, Sausages and Chinese rolls from Keels, garments from MAS and Brandix , NDB and DFCC Banks for their generous support and the support from our many friends of St Andrews and members of the Congregation.

A happy atmosphere , the rain stayed away and over Rs250,000 raised towards the running costs of St Andrews Scots Kirk Netherlee Cottage Mission Project.



A Memorial Service was held for Patrick Brochard on November 25th at St Andrew's Scots Kirk. Patrick died on October 25th and his funeral was on October 28th.

Patrick is sadly missed by Anna, Lukas, Annabella, Dilshan, Beatrice and Donatella.

INTERVIEW WITH ROBYN MUDIE (AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER)

Introduction

I was born in Adelaide, South Australia. My parents were both born and bred there. My mother's English parents migrated to Australia at a young age and my father's family migrated to Adelaide from Scotland and Cornwall in the late 1800s.

Having moved around Australia with my father's job as a radio announcer with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, we moved back to Adelaide in 1979, where I spent my teenage and early adult years and have always felt at home there. Whilst studying for my degree in Politics at the University of Adelaide, I learned about the role of foreign diplomacy in world affairs. I set my sights on that as my future career and, after applying

in two successive years, I was selected for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade graduate intake in 1990. 26 years later, I have never looked back!

My career has taken me to Hanoi in Vietnam, New York – at Australian Permanent Mission to the UN – and Geneva, where I served as Australia's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN.

I have been very privileged to serve as Australia's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka and the Maldives for the past four years. We will return to Australia in January 2016. I expect to serve in Canberra for 3-4 years before going out on posting again.

How would you describe yourself?

I am hardworking and ambitious, and this has been a driving force throughout my life. I am highly organised and plan well ahead. I like to think I am fair-minded, ethical and compassionate and that these traits define how I treat others.

I love travel and history. I like understanding how the world fits together – whether it's through personal connections to time and place, or the broader history of a country and people. I like to keep records of my experiences, so I have a huge collection of photos, letters, emails and diaries. These grow every time I move to a new country!

I value friendship, and work hard to keep in touch with our large circle of friends around the world through letter, email and, in recent years, Facebook.

Family, being a career woman

First and foremost I am a family person. I love nothing more than being in the heart of my family with my husband, Jon Phelps, and sons, Ambrose, 10 and Dylan, 7. We also have a dog, Gracie, the Jack Russell, who is now 12 and is an important part of the team.

It's always a juggle to maintain a fast-paced career and a family, but I am very determined to do both as well as I can. It is all about organisation, planning and priorities. However, there are still times when I feel pulled in different directions and feel I can't fulfil either role as well as I should. Jon is a huge source of support and I could not have managed the demanding role as High Commissioner without him. I am also very lucky that the boys have been very understanding about their busy mother, and they have both accepted this as part of the way we live our life. So it's a team effort!

What is your favorite food and why

Coming from multicultural Australia, I love spicy food, so I have adored Sri Lanka and its curries! My favorite meal here is breakfast. I love nothing more than an egg hopper with katta sambal, dahl and some fiery chicken or fish curry – washed down with a cup of hot coffee. I plan to take a hopper pan back to Australia with me so I can practice making my own, but I doubt I will ever be able to replicate the wonderful breakfasts I have enjoyed here.



Most memorable moment in Sri Lanka

I have been very fortunate through my work to have met many people around the country who have been supported by Australia's aid program. On my visits to conflict affected and marginalised communities, I always take time to talk to people, to ask about their concerns and hopes and to try to understand how best we can assist them. My most memorable moments are the times I have sat down with women in these communities and talked to them as a fellow woman and mother. It is humbling to hear from women who have to overcome significant challenges every day just to send their children to school and support their families. I feel very privileged that these women are prepared to trust me enough to talk to me about their lives. Just this week, I met a group in the east and was inspired by their determination to keep building their skills and find sustainable employment to support their families and communities. I am very pleased that one of the aims of our aid program going forward is to work to address the issues which continue to affect vulnerable women, and to give them a better chance for the future.

Another important memory for our family will always be the connection we have made with members of a village in the east by supporting the rebuilding of teachers' quarters at the local school. We hope this will mean all the children in the village will be able to complete their schooling and that this will be the case into the future. Our visits to the community have given us an insight into the challenges facing other families, and a better understanding of the country as a whole.

How do we chill out in Sri Lanka and where

Our favourite chill out is a weekend at Bentota Beach. We have been down there countless times. It's wonderful to be by the sea, and for the boys to be free to run around, build sandcastles and play in the surf. For me, it's a release from the constant pressure and preoccupation of my job. The most important thing is that people down there know us, welcome us, but leave us alone to enjoy our family time. In this busy life, where I am so visible, that's a real gift to all of us.

What are three things you can't do without

My family, who are the centre of my world, my diary which allows me to express myself and record my precious memories and regular hard exercise, which relieves stress and helps fend off the effects of delicious Sri Lankan food!

What has been most challenging in your posting to Sri Lanka

The role of High Commissioner comes with an ever increasing set of demands for my time and attention, from countless different sources. Juggling all of these and making sure I don't let anyone down has been pretty challenging. I always want to give my best to every part of my work, as well as to my role as wife and mother, and this can be very demanding, especially when I am out and about most days and nights of the week.

What is it you like about Sri Lanka the most?

I love the life and colour of this beautiful island. Everything here is so vibrant – from the tropical greens, to the blue sea, to the beautiful colours of your clothes. One of my most vivid memories is from my first weekend in the country, in February 2012, when I was taken from Colombo to Anuradhapura for the national day event. Driving across from Habarana to Anuradhapura in the early morning, I was captivated by the colourful houses, the beautiful children playing in the morning sun and the lovely sight of little smiling girls in colourful dresses, with their hair in braids. This colour and life, and the warmth of your smiles translates into the approach people bring to their lives – and to me it defines this country.



Who would be my role model and why

I admire women who have forged their own way in the world, and helped to blaze the trails which have then allowed others to succeed. There are so many women who have helped make the world a more equal place. In Australia women like Jessie Street, who served in the early United Nations, and Lowitja O'Donohue, who supported indigenous rights for all in the 1960s, have shown the rest of us what can be done. In my adult life I have taken inspiration from stories of women like this, and so many others, who have taken risks to fight for women's rights. I hope that, in my own way, I have also made a contribution.

In terms of personal influence, my mother and two grandmothers have had a big influence on who I am. I was fortunate to know both grandmothers until I was a teenager and young adult, and I keep in close touch with my mother, wherever I am in the world. In their various ways, they taught me about compassion, fairness, stoicism and honesty. My father's mother had a lively interest in the world around her, and a love of family history which both my father and I have inherited. My mother's mother, my Gran, came from a family which suffered huge losses over the two World Wars. Despite this, she and her own mother built a solid foundation for our family life which helped define my childhood. As I have grown older I have understood even more clearly how much courage and determination they must have had to do that. It shows again what women are capable of.

What is your pet peeve?

Selfishness, lack of courtesy, and the debilitating effect of mobile communications on our world. I think it's sad to get on a train or a bus anywhere in the world and see people with their heads down swiping at a mobile phone screen. We are letting these devices erode our personal connections, as well as fundamental traits like empathy and awareness.

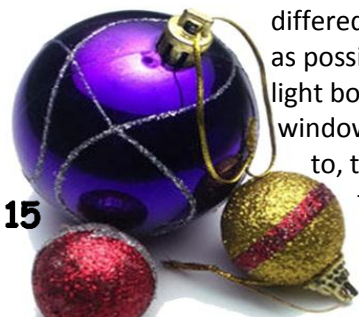


What compelled you to worship at St Andrew's and why?

I was brought up as an Anglican, and church has always played an important part in my life. Thanks to my mother, we spent many Sundays in Adelaide going to church together, and I attended an Anglican school for the last two years of my school life. So wherever I go in the world I like to find a place to worship, and it's important to me that my sons are also brought in up in the Christian faith. When I first visited St Andrew's in 2012, I immediately felt at home. The style of worship and music are familiar and the congregation has been very welcoming. This has given me and my family a real sense of belonging in Colombo.

RESTORATION OF THE LEADED GLASS WINDOWS IN ST ANDREW'S SCOTS KIRK

For some years it has been evident that the opening frames of the leaded glass windows in St Andrews Scots Kirk were in need of attention. Not only were the actual frames requiring repair having broken hinges, broken handles and broken missing support bar, but in some cases the leaded glass panel within the frames were nearing the state of collapse. Many pans (known in the trade as leaded likes) had been replaced by the best substitute glass available. This glass differed in color and texture, but had been skillfully used to fill in gaps and keep the panels as complete as possible. In the past, considerable care had also been taken to apply silicone around each leaded light board inside and outside on all windows. This had worked remarkably well for years in holding the window panels together to withstand the frequent opening necessary for ventilation. However, due to the deterioration in the frames, the glass and the lead work, the integrity of the windows was falling. Restoration was duly planned.





The Olive green leaded glass windows are mostly like to have been installed when the church was built in 1907. Some 14 years later the leaded glass in the large window was replaced with beautiful design stained glass. We have learned from architectural account, that stained glass windows, notably the west windows, the main channel windows are the 2 transept windows, were manufactured in UK, shipped to Colombo and installed in the church in 1921. It should be noted description of each this window is given in the previous newsletter.

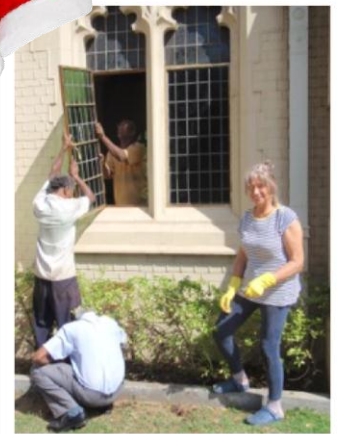


In some respect history has repeated itself! Now, just over one hundred years later, windows have again been shifted from Scotland to Colombo, a total of 12 panels, 2 in the original glass and built in new glass. The particular cathedral glass required to match the original, not available locally in Sri Lanka, had eventually been sourced in the UK. The leaded glass panels, built in Scotland were crated, up along with equipment, tools and materials, (mainly lead strip, known as lead came, in selected size) and shipped to Colombo. Once delivered to the church, the project continued using the original glass.



The workshop was set up in a veranda on side and been able to spread into further verandah space was definite bonus. Church staffs were more helpful in being available to give assistance, whenever required. Although scraping the silicone was a not favorite task! In total, 20 new window panels were built, replacing all the opening windows in the church and the vestry. In construction, each individual panel is formed on a work bench, the lead joints soldered on both sides of the panel. Putty is

forced into the small space between the lead and the glass, to firm up the panel and to render it wind and waterproof. Wire ties, soldered in place, are fastened to the bars across each opening frames to maintain stability. As necessary, repairs were also carried out in situ to the ornamental areas of the main windows and to the stain glasses in the south transept.



A most important part of the window restoration was the repair of the metal window frames, which, when cleaned up, revealed their full glory. They are built entirely in brass, with hinge. Ornate handles, screws, stays and bars are all in brass. Cleaning up and repair was a huge task, diligently carried out by an excellent team of specialist workmen from a local construction firm. Their task also included fitting the new window panel into the renovated, fully operational window frame. Gradually the appearance of the church improved with new



panels replacing the boards and polythene which had offered safe protection for several months while work was underway. For various reasons there had been a delay in the start of the restoration project. However, once on track, all involved worked extremely intensively to complete the work by mid-September 2015. There was such a great team spirit between staff and workers that the restoration of the windows at St Andrew's Scots Kirk was a certainly happy and enjoyable experience and one which will always hold many happy memories.



~ Catriona R. Mackinon (Stained Glass Artis)





Christmas at St. Andrew's

24th December

11.15 pm

Christmas-Eve Watchnight Service

*A Service of Holy Communion with Readings and Carols for
Brass, Choir, and Congregation*

Rev. Dr. Gary Van Brocklin, Guest Preacher

Colombo Brass Ensemble, Naveen Fernando, Leader

25th December

9.30 am

Christmas Day

A Service of Readings and Carols

Rev. Roshan Mendis, Guest Preacher

Editorial Committee

Savithri Rodrigo

Sue Campbell

Rev. Dr. Roderick Campbell

Gillian Mailler

Design and Layout

Uruthirakumaran James