



Bulletin - February 2008

President's Address on 18th January 2008

(Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the DBU)



Dear Fellow Members and Friends,
It is with a great sense of pride that I welcome you to this memorable occasion – the commemoration of the general inaugural Meeting of the Dutch Burgher Union which took place on Saturday, the 18th January 1908, one hundred years ago! I stand in awe at the magnitude of this occasion and I cannot but remember the late Mr R.G. Anthonisz who was the Founder of the Dutch Burgher Union, who gave the Union life and nurtured it. In my

mind the late Mr Anthonisz was the most outstanding President of the DBU and he held office from 1916 to 1930 – 14 years. This institution of his creation must never die, just as the memory of Mr Anthonisz can never die in the hearts and minds of all of us here present.

We are proud of the distinguished roll of men and women who have filled the office of President, and inspired in others the spirit of service these past one hundred years.

The varied activities of the Union need the services of loyal and efficient workers, ready to sacrifice both time and effort in the interests of the community. It is this spirit of service, more than any other, which has ensured the stability of the Union.

Much has been achieved during the past one hundred years and we have grown from strength to strength, notwithstanding the challenges, problems and difficulties we have faced from time to time.

We are the custodians of a precious inheritance, so let us strive forward, hand in hand, facing new challenges, overcoming any difficulties and receiving for our task inspiration from our Motto – “EENDRACHT MAAKT MACHT” – Unity is strength.

Kem Martenstyn
President

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Editorial

February is here—the month of roses and poems and all things romantic, as the whole world celebrates the feast of St Valentine!

February is also the month when several countries in the world celebrate “Mardi Gras” in preparation for the abstinence and self-control practiced during Lent. The DBU too was planning on celebrating “Mardi Gras” this month. However, due to the tense situation in the country we felt it was not quite appropriate for us to celebrate at this time, and therefore decided to postpone the party for March, if, hopefully, things improve by then.

We are, however, continuing with the Wednesday nights entertainment, and have various musicians/entertainers providing

music and dancing for you on those nights. See elsewhere in this issue for details.

Our Centenary celebrations continued with Members and their spouses /partners meeting on the lawn of the DBU on the 18th January to commemorate the founding of the Dutch Burgher Union in 1908, with a cocktail party. We intend having a host of activities and events throughout this year to celebrate our Centennial—after all, how many organisations can claim to be a100 years old and still going strong?!

We owe it all to you, our members, and look forward to your participation in all our events. Please also patronize our lovely bar and lounge upstairs for a nice quiet drink or meeting with friends in the superb ambience there. We are working on

having some DJ music on Saturday nights as well in addition to the Wednesday nights which are very popular. So, bring your friends along and take advantage of all this, at very reasonable prices too!

On a more sober note, let’s all pray for peace in our land, reconciliation amongst all races of its citizens, and restoration of freedom to all who live in this our beautiful Sri Lanka “where every aspect pleases and only man is vile”.

Cheers and a Happy Valentine’s Day to you all!

Anne-Marie Kellar
Secretary

Centenary Celebrations

A very special event was commemorated at the DBU on 18th January 2008, when the Union celebrated 100 years of its existence. For, it was on this very day in 1908 that the inaugural Meeting of the DBU was held and the DUTCH BURGHER UNION OF CEYLON saw the light of day.

The evening’s proceedings began with a Commemorative Meeting of the General Committee, Chaired by the President Mrs. Kem Martenstyn. Inbrief Address she expressed great satisfaction for the pioneering spirit of the Founding Fathers; and wished the Union great success in all the years that lie ahead.

After a group photograph of the Committee taken on the lawn of the front garden, Members were welcomed to the Cocktail Party that followed. The gaily illuminated and flood-lit front lawn was almost like a fairyland, and provided an ideal backdrop to the evening’s entertainment. It was heartwarming to see members as they

moved around enjoying the ambience of the delightful surroundings mingling together and forging new friendships and strengthening existing ties. This all amounted to the realistic manner in achieving some of the objects and aspirations for which the DBU was founded.



TheCocktail partywas hosted in Buffet style and the Buffet table itself bore a spread of the most delectable refreshments which added spice to the flavour of a special occasion. Kumar Molligoda delighted the guests with the music provided by him

on the saxophone and this added to the camaraderie.

President Mrs. Kem Martenstyn in her welcome speech lauded the efforts of the late Mr. R.G. Anthonisz and his team for their wisdom and foresight in founding the Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon which has the test of time for 100 years, and is still on a footing firm enough to last many more centuries. She exhorted the members of the Burgher community in Sri Lanka to rally round the Union and honour its Motto "Eendracht Maakt Macht" which means Unity Is Strength.

All credit for the meticulous planning and execution of this event falls squarely on our President Mrs. Kem Martenstyn, who in her inimitable style no doubt burnt the midnight oil in an effort to make this unique event the grand and memorable success it was.

Anthea & Vernon Muller

Message from Mr Errol Jacotine – President, ECOM

On behalf of the Committee and the General Membership of The Eighty Club Melbourne I wish to extend Our Heartiest Congratulations and Best Wishes to The Dutch Burgher Union of Ceylon on reaching the unique milestone of 100 years on 18th Jan 2008.

It has been a great heartening and meaningful relationship between our two organisations in caring for the less fortunate of our community. We are most thankful for your assistance and help without which we would never have been able to achieve the aims of our club..

May the Good Lord Bless the Dutch Burgher Union and may you grow from strength to strength.

With our Very warm regards

Errol Jacotine

President Eighty Club Melbourne

Order of Australia for Primrose

Primrose Werkmeister of Wheelers Hill helped found Voluntary Outreach Club, which raises about \$17,000 annually to support 70 needy households in Sri Lanka. Today, she is recognised with a Medal in the General Division of the Order of Australia.

She became involved with the club after a 1982 holiday in Sri Lanka, where there is no pension or safety net for the poor. The memory of a family living behind a bakery, using newspapers as a floor has remained with her.

She said the charity's provision of food and income continued to be vital. Ms Werkmeister has headed the club's

19-member committee for a lot of its life - as president for three years, and vice-president (and often acting president) for 13 years.

"I've been determined to keep our good work going and not to let [the VOC] fold up," she says. "I feel very fulfilled and very happy putting in hard work and doing something good to help people."

She has also been a board member and president of the Australia Ceylon Fellowship Association for 28 years. (*From the Monash Journal*)

Note—Primrose is the sister of the DBU President Kem Martenstyn.



Our Ambassador in Melbourne *by Dr. Sanjiva Wijesinha*

(*From the Island newspaper*)

One of the most interesting gentlemen I used to meet during my years in Melbourne was a man called Victor Melder.

Victor was born in Sri Lanka – in Kandy, where he attended St Sylvester's College. Hailing from a railway family (his father and grandfather before him having been "engine-drivers" for the Ceylon Government Railway), it was natural that Victor himself would follow the family tradition and become a CGR driver.

But in 1968, Victor and his wife Esther decided to migrate with their two Galle-born children to Melbourne – where Victor soon found employment in the public service. Starting life in his new country, Victor was appalled (as most migrants to Australia in those days were) at his co-workers' lack of knowledge about his

former home. At first his "educating" of his new friends and neighbours was limited simply to talking to them and correcting some of their misconceptions about our island in the sun- but soon he realized that he needed more information to satisfy the curiosity of all those in Melbourne who wanted to know more.

He gradually started collecting information about Ceylon (as our nation was known in those pre-1972 days) and this collection of newspaper cuttings, magazines, books and journals gradually grew and expanded until it filled a whole room of his house.

As the library grew, so did Victor's reputation – as a walking encyclopaedia about Sri Lanka and matters Sri Lankan – and he was invited to give talks on these subjects to various groups and schools.



Initially he illustrated his talks with pictures and posters, progressing later to lantern slides and finally graduating to Powerpoint presentations. His webpage (at <http://tormel.brinkster.net>) now provides a most user-friendly access to The Victor Melder Sri Lanka Library.

The library itself (which I had the privilege of visiting myself) is housed in an annexe at the back of his house. It has over 4,500 books on Sri Lanka and around two thousand different magazines – including every issue of the journal of the Dutch Burgher Union (DBU) for the past one hundred years.

There is also much material - such as a complete Index to the Baptisms and Marriages Registry of the Wolvendaal Church from 1706 to 1952 – for those who want to research their genealogy. This resource is particularly popular for those Australians descended from our migrant Burgher families who want to trace their original roots. He also has a small collection of Sri Lankan CDs, DVDs and videos – although sadly he has had to give his 35 year collection of Sri Lanka Sunday newspapers which he had, to a researcher who was able to store them.

The library has been utilized by many students from Melbourne's universities who have found it a valuable source of material for their dissertations and theses – and have found Victor a valuable "unofficial" tutor. It has also been used by famous novelists such as Michelle de Kretser to undertake research about our country in the course of writing their popular works of fiction. He even has groups of school children, accompanied by their teachers, visiting his library to collect material for some of their class presentations.

The beauty of Victor's work is that all his services – allowing visitors to use the material in the library, helping them with answers to their questions or finding out from his vast network of contacts where they can get their answers when he cannot provide the answers himself - are FREE. His has been a labour – nay a vocation - of love, sustained by his own efforts and now that he has retired,

by donations from the occasional well wisher. "If anyone is able to help me with donations of books" says Victor, "I would appreciate them getting in touch with me on tormel@aardvark.net.au"

"When I am no more" he continues, "the entire contents of the library have been willed to Monash University – who have agreed to maintain it as the Victor Melder Wing of the University library."

Sri Lanka has had many High Commissioners in Canberra – appointed by our government to represent this country in Australia. But I believe it is ordinary citizens like Victor – by their love for Sri Lanka, their painstaking efforts and their person-to-person ambassadorial skills – who have done so much for this country among the Australian people.

Much more, perhaps, than some of our salaried diplomatic representatives.

Mail Room



Dear Anne-Marie

Victor Melder has just passed on to me the latest newsletter. What a well constructed and beautiful edition - my compliments to the people who put it together. Keep it up.

My wife and I read it enthusiastically and were overjoyed to see that the Burghers (our kinfolk) who are still resident in the island were still capable of having good times for St Nicolaas' Day, Christmas and New Year's Eve. We were young adults when we left Ceylon some 53 years ago and still remember the dances we enjoyed - the main ones at the BRC, The Police and New Year's Eve (the one at Bolgoda was the best) where we danced until the dawn broke when it was hopper time before we all departed to join our families for New Years Day services. What blessed times they were. A time of peace and love between all sections of the community. May I thank the Committee of the DBU for the extra good advert for my latest book. I have had feed back from our kith and kin who are spread all over the world and the response to the book has been enormous.

In conclusion, may I say that I look forward to receiving the newsletter on a regular basis.

Sincerely

Ivo Kelaart

Hi Anne-Marie,

Thank you for the December issue which I just received. Another excellent edition, congratulations to all. Reading about the Tournaments it brought back pleasant memories when we the comrades had their Table Tennis and Snooker tournaments every year. I guess this was one of the few times we were allowed upstairs to visit the/Snooker room, as we had to use the two tables. The table tennis table was housed in the verandah just outside the hall.

Your New Year eve's party appeared to be a blast and looking at the pictures everyone appeared to be having a good time. It reminds me of the days when the Comrades used to have their dance parties in the same Hall, once a month on a Friday, where all the young girls and boys gathered to meet and greet. At Christmas

time we had a special dance to celebrate Christmas and enjoy ourselves. At about 12.30 the parents use to turn up to take their siblings home. Those were wonderful events. Monte Holsinger used to attend, he should be able to recall those fun day where everyone used to look forward to the DBU dances.

Keep up the good work.

All the best for the New Year. Looking forward to reading about your events in the coming months.

Warm regards.

Davenal Flanderka

Dear Etienne,

Thank you for the Bulletin which gets bigger and better with every issue. The Editor is to be warmly congratulated.

Regards,

Darryl Isaaks

Wednesday Nights at the DBU

We have a programme of entertainment lined up for you midweek, with a number of well known musicians/entertainers performing at the Members Lounge upstairs from 8 p.m. till midnight every Wednesday.

February's programme is as follows:

13th- Suriyakumar

27th - Nimal Jayamanne

So come on down to the DBU, bring your guests, and have a good evening of excellent music and dancing!

Birthday Greetings



Birthday greetings and best wishes are sent to all our members celebrating their birthdays in February, specially to:

Mrs Loretta Burditt, Ms Tamara Flamer-Caldera, Ms Janice Joachim, Mrs Bobby Jordan-Hansen, Mrs Sabina Kelaart, Mrs Anthea Muller, Mrs Carmen Melder, Mrs Mary Ridgeon, Mrs Penny Stork, Mrs Eesha Speldewinde, Mrs Sheilagh Vincent and Ms Susanne Van Lieshout, Messrs. Mervyn Anderiesz, Andrew Christoffelsz, Kevin Gray, Carlyle Gray, David Joachim, Anver Jafferjee, Dominic Kellar, Dallas Martenstyn, J.B. Muller, Richard Ohlmus, R.C. Prins, Samson Ian Pereira, Gerard Schokman, Mark Gilbert Sisouw De Zilva and Neville Shane Van Eyck,

Special Notice — Annual General Meeting

Annual General Meeting:

The Annual General Meeting of the Union will be held on the 28th March 2008 at 7.00 p.m. in the Union Hall.

Nominations:

Nominations for the posts of the 4 Principal Officers, 11 Committee Members and 3 ex-officio Committee Members shall be in accordance with Rules 7.3 and 7.5 of the DBU Constitution and will be received at the Union Office,

during normal working hours upto 5 p.m. on the 22nd February 2008. Nomination papers that are incomplete or received after the closing time will be rejected.

There is no special format for nomination papers. The Office has also prepared a document for convenience and any candidate (or proposer) may request for one. However, the use of this nomination paper is NOT mandatory. Candidates may prepare their own papers provided that all

the relevant provisions in Rules 7.3 and 7.5 are fully met.

Membership Cards for 2008:

Admittance to the AGM will be strictly on production of the membership card at the entrance to the Hall.

Anne-Marie Kellar
Secretary



Images from the 100th Anniversary celebrations

