



# NEWSLETTER

OCT 2015

**The Queen's College of Guyana Association (UK)**  
(Registered Charity No. 801250)

No. 50

## QC TOPS AT CAPE

Congratulations to QC student **Cecil Cox** for securing top place in the country at the recent CAPE (A-level) examinations, with 6 Grade I and 1 Grade III passes. Also to two other top performers, **Larissa Wiltshire** and **Sasha Woodroffe** (QCOSA President Brian Woodroffe's elder daughter) who each gained 6 Grade I passes.

However top honours at CSEC (GCSE/O-level) went to others this year, although some QC students performed well.

## CHARITABLE INITIATIVES:

### FUNDING OF AIR CON UNITS AND AIR FARES FOR PHYSICS TEACHERS

£1380 was recently transferred to QCOSA, Guyana, for the purchase and installation of an air conditioning unit for each of the school's two sick bays. ICQC Executive Secretary **Alfred Granger** (New York Association) was instrumental in effecting all the necessary contractual arrangements. The units have been installed and are operational.

However our plans to pay the air fares for at least two physics graduates to teach at Queen's for a year have, for the time being, been put on hold.

Back in 2012 former Headmaster and physics master **Clarence Trotz\*** wrote to Ian Wishart expressing concern over the lack of qualified science teachers at QC, stating that the school "has not had a properly qualified Physics teacher for the past twelve years" (see 'Crisis in Science', *Newsletter* No 45, June 2012). He also raised the matter at ICQC's Annual Business Meeting held in Scarborough, Ontario in 2012.

As a short term solution, Clarence subsequently suggested that recent graduates from Canadian and UK Universities be invited to teach at QC for a year. The plan was for the respective Associations to identify suitable candidates and pay their return fares, whilst the Ministry of Education would provide accommodation and a monthly stipend. Formal contracts would be prepared by the Ministry, which the Associations would check for suitability before passing them on to the candidates.

Committee member **John Jones-Alleyne** then submitted a proposal to the Committee, which was approved. Advertisements were placed at UK universities, and four physics graduates responded. John then held a briefing session at the High Commission, and submitted the CVs to Headmistress **Ms. Jackie Benn** who approved of three of the candidates.

Having heard nothing further from the Ministry (bearing in mind that there had been a change of government), QCOSA suggested that the candidates could be employed by the University of Guyana (UG) – who are able to engage staff directly. The candidates would work at UG to re-launch the physics degree, and teach QC's CAPE (A-level) students. UG would also be able to provide accommodation. UG agreed in principle with this arrangement. However, in the meantime the three chosen candidates withdrew because of the delay. A fourth candidate has now been selected, and we are hopeful that arrangements will be finalised for him to travel in October.

\* A former Vice-President, Clarence now lives in Toronto.

## NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION HINTS AT LIMITING NUMBER OF SUBJECTS TAKEN IN ONE SITTING AT CSEC

In our last *Newsletter* (No. 49, December 2014) we highlighted the increase in the number of subjects being taken by some students at CSEC, from 10 in 1997 to 20 last year.

In an interview with *Kaieteur News* (25 August), Minister of Education (QC alumnus) Dr **Rupert Roopnarine** criticised this trend, saying “Frankly it has really bugged my mind to know how a student can be doing 18 subjects and more” at the expense of extra-curricular activities – essential components of a well-rounded education. He intended to have discussions with senior officers in the Ministry with a view to limiting the number of subjects to be taken at one sitting.

However his stance was questioned by the outgoing Minister (QC alumna) **Priya Manickchand** who was against imposing a limit.

CXC (Caribbean Examinations Council) Registrar Dr Diadacus Jules commented that the number of subjects taken at one sitting was a matter for schools and parents, not for CXC. He went on to stress that the number of subjects passed does not determine whether a candidate becomes top regional performer.

## LUNCH ATTENDANCE AND PROFIT UP, BUT SUMMER BARBECUE CANCELLED AND CARNIVAL FÊTE MAKES A SUBSTANTIAL LOSS

Despite concerns over the effect of the London Marathon, with its concomitant road closures, attendance at the Spring Lunch held at The Bedford public house in Balham on 26 April was back up to the level last seen in 2012: 78 adults and two children, compared with 76 adults and four children in 2012 (in 2013 and 2014 attendance was around 60). A profit of £647 was realised (£259 last year and £438 in 2013).

Mark Adamson has been our link with the Church of St John-the-Evangelist, in whose garden the Summer Barbecue has been held since 1993. Unfortunately Mark was admitted to hospital, and though he is now back in his flat, his mobility is severely impaired. Consequently there was insufficient time to make alternative arrangements for the barbecue. However, Mark has now obtained the Vicar’s consent for the event to be held next year without the need for Mark’s involvement.

A poor turnout at the Carnival Fête held on 30 August resulted in a loss of £567, compared with a profit of £657 last year. The new venue, The Classic in Tooting, was considered an improvement on Club Jasmins, and it is hoped to do better next year.

## COMMITTEE RESIGNATION AND CO-OPTION

Hon Treasurer **Khatijah Shakur** has regrettably tendered her resignation from the Committee for health reasons. **Praveen Hanoman** will continue in the role as Acting Treasurer. Also, former Committee member **Rod Westmaas** has returned to the UK and has been co-opted onto the Committee.

## SALVETE

**Michael Cox** has converted to life membership.

## VALETE

We regret to announce the deaths of: **Andrei Allicock** (QC 72–5), *b.* 28.7.56, *d.* 22.4.15 in the US; **Alan P Banks** (QC 51–?), *d.* July; Past President and Life Member **Lloyd Evelyn Bascom** (QC 1934–40), *b.* 15.7.20, *d.* 15.4.15 – see Obituary below; **Sydney Ormond Burgan** (QC 1930s), *b.* 24.8.26, *d.* 25.4.15 (maternal uncle of Bruce and the late Keith Nóbrega); **Seville A Farley** (QC 52–59), past Secretary and Director of QCAA Toronto, *d.* 10.8.15 in Toronto; **Keith A Nóbrega** (QC 52–62), *b.* 16.8.43, died suddenly on 1.1.15 when on holiday in England from Toronto; **Michael Stewart Ridley** (QC 49–59), *b.* 1.8.40, *d.* 7.4.15 in Barbados where he’d been a Consulting Civil Engineer.

To the bereaved relatives the Association extends its sincerest condolences.

## **OBITUARY**

### **LLOYD EVELYN (“SPARKS”) BASCOM**

Lloyd came to England, then the “mother country” in 1953, like many West Indians to better his prospects.

He was a founder member of the Association and a member of the steering committee set up at the meeting of QC alumni convened by John Rafferty on 11 December 1987. At the inaugural meeting of the Association held on 3 June 1988, he was elected to the Management Committee and re-elected at the 1989 and 1990 AGMs, becoming its Chairman in the 1990–91 year. Following the departure of our first President, High Commissioner Cecil Pilgrim, Lloyd was elected to that post at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on 12 March 1993, remaining President until his resignation at the 1998 AGM. He was then appointed a Vice-President, and remained in that capacity until 2013.

At school Lloyd was an outstanding athlete, earning the sobriquet “Sparks”, as a sprinter and long jumper. He was Senior Athletics Champion in 1937, ’38 and ’40 (winning the 100, 220 and 440 yards in ’38) and Captain of Athletics in 1939 (see photograph on p. 6, *Newsletter* No 42, December 2012).

In the UK Lloyd was active in the Credit Union movement.

The Association was represented at his cremation on 28 April by Christopher Chunnillall, Ian Wishart and Fred Weston, whose father (after whom Weston House is named) was Lloyd’s athletics coach.

Lloyd is survived by Freda, his partner of 45 years.

*Ian Wishart*

### **CONGRATULATIONS / THANKS**

To: former Committee member **Dominic Gaskin** (QC 73–78) on his appointment as **Minister of Business and Investment** in the new Government of Guyana;

To: **Bob Chee-a-Tow**, **Rosemarie Williams**, and alumni **Dionne Dalgety**, **Paul Hodgson**, **Bruce Nóbrega** and Life Member **David Pollard** for their kind donations to the Association.

### **NEW YORK ASSOCIATION TO ORGANISE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR STUDENTS AT QC**

Following the successful 2014 Conference attended by over 200 QC students during the 170th anniversary celebrations, the QC Alumni Association of New York, through its newly established Youth Development Fund, is organising the Second Annual Conference on 29 and 30 October at the school. Its theme: Empowering and Inspiring Youth for the Future.

The Conference will feature seminars and team building exercises. There will also be some participation by other, invited schools. Topics, by volunteer presenters, will include:

- Goal setting and time management
- Creating a small business
- Résumé and cover letter writing
- Interviewing skills
- Leadership skills
- Business etiquette
- Career opportunities
- Sports
- Valuing differences
- Public speaking.

## NEW YORK ASSOCIATION HONOURS DISTINGUISHED ALUMNAE

As part of their celebrations commemorating 40 years of co-education at Queen's, the New York Association held a gala dinner-dance on 25th April at which four distinguished old girls were honoured. The function was held under the patronage of Guyana's Ambassador HE **Bayney Karran**, himself an old boy, whilst old boy **Clarence Trotz**, headmaster at the inception of co-education, was the guest speaker.

The honorees were: Dr **Michelle Foster**, CEO of KISRA, a faith-motivated non-profit organisation in West Virginia; **Dawn Holder-Alert**, lawyer, former QCOSA executive, honoured for her varied and numerous civic involvements in Guyana; **Amlata Persaud**, a Fellow at Columbia University's Teachers' College and former Rhodes Scholar; and Dr **Alissa Trotz**, Associate Professor of Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto, an eminent scholar and educator.

## NEW BOOKS

### *INDIA UNDER SIEGE: THE ENEMY WITHIN*

*A Concise History*

by **Mohan Ragbeer**

[Amazon, US\$25; Kindle ebook US\$8; ISBN-13: 978 1 506 12361 5; ISBN10: 1506123619; 516 pp]

Following his 2-volume book on Guyana – *The Indelible Red Stain* (see *Newsletter* No 45, June 2012) – QC alumnus Dr Ragbeer has written what is likely to be, at least in parts, a controversial history of India with his criticisms of the Mughals, the British and post-independence Congress governments. To quote from a description of the book: “Moderate Islam has been largely usurped by militant Wahhabism ... and Christianity by proselytes backed by rich foreign NGOs, aided by Indian atheists and Communists (!) they exploit India's weak secularism and laws protecting minorities, preach anti-Hinduism and continue to teach the debunked and divisive 19th century British myths. The author feels that these and other factors are weakening India from within.”

*Mohan M S Ragbeer attended Queen's from 1947 to 1950. He was co-founder and first editor of the school's (now defunct) newspaper The QC Lictor. A graduate of UCWI, he is a retired professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at McMaster University, Ontario, and a former Dean of the Medical Faculty at UWI, Mona. He has written extensively both on international affairs and medical matters. Mohan lives in Toronto.*

### *FINDING MYSELF: ESSAYS ON RACE, POLITICS & CULTURE*

by **Clem Seecharan**

[Peepal Tree Press, Leeds; £19.99; 338 pp]

This collection of Clem Seecharan's shorter writings gives us a rare glimpse of a Guyanese scholar's intellectual formation. The earliest piece is his interview of Ivan Madray, dating from 1988. (In the Acknowledgments the date of the publication *Slavery and Abolition* Vol 18, in which his essay 'Culture and Ethnicity in Post-Emancipation Guyana' appeared, is dated 1977, a misprint for 1997). The pieces have been revised slightly. These essays provide a good introduction to most of the author's interpretations of Guyanese history from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards – cricket appears via the Madray interview and indirectly in an essay on the young C.L.R. James. Any historian who enrages both main political parties in Guyana should be read with care.

More interesting, however, because they are so rare in Guyanese and West Indian scholarship, are the essays about his intellectual development. The longest essay, the first in the book, tells of his friendship with Ian McDonald and his influence on his intellectual development. The third, fourth and fifth essays in the second part, entitled 'Sugar in My Blood' (from his biography of Jock Campbell *Sweetening Bitter Sugar*), 'Girmitiyas and my Discovery of India' and 'In Sir Vidia's Shadow, Out of Historical Darkness',

flesh out that intellectual memoir and allow us to understand the historian better. Bringing these pieces together is the most valuable aspect of the book – the other essays can be found, if sometimes with difficulty for those with no access to academic libraries.

The essays in the third part, ‘Locating Cheddi Jagan’ provide a guide to the author’s interpretation of Guyanese politics and the role of Cheddi Jagan. Here one can be in agreement with the general argument while dissenting at various points. There is a lack of sympathy and understanding of why and how a political generation and its leaders could have been so committed to Marxism –the answer might be that Guyanese politicians were not exceptional in this respect and that the power of Bookers and the sugar interest and Demba might have inclined them to adopt those beliefs. A shared Marxism of an unoriginal sort perhaps encouraged these politicians to neglect the whole problem of racism: they could play with fire because with the revolution capitalism and racism would both end. Here perhaps the author might have paid more careful heed to C.L.R. James’s later political writings which he dismisses. James became increasingly concerned about the necessity for democratic control though he failed to make this central in his late writings about the West Indies. It was not simply a belief in Marxism that caused the problems – the tradition of West Indian liberalism resting on a belief that the educated should rule created an elite throughout the Commonwealth Caribbean who felt no need to listen carefully to ordinary people, to argue with them, to convince them and above all to learn from them. The intellectual roots of the Guyanese disaster lie here. As this collection shows, voting and winning elections is not enough.

Peter D Fraser.

Ian Wishart adds:

In the second essay in Part I – ‘India’s Awakening...’ – the author writes, “As Edgar Mittelholzer, who grew up in New Amsterdam...next door to the most distinguished Indian family in British Guiana, the Luckhoos, recalls [in *A Swarthy Boy*], “coolies” we called them, whether they were labourers...or doctors or lawyers [‘barristers’ in the original] or civil servants.” The quote is from Appendix I and describes the general attitude of the coloured middle class to Indians. It does not specifically refer to the Luckhoos. In fact, despite some initial snobbism and feelings of social superiority by Mittelholzer’s mother and aunts, he and his sisters played with the Luckhoo children, Edward Luckhoo came over for music lessons, and “my mother and aunts cultivated a very close friendship with Mrs Luckhoo and her sister...and hardly a day passed without an exchange of visits for whist.”

*Clem Secharan attended Queen’s from 1965 to 1967. He was head of Caribbean Studies at London Metropolitan University and is now Emeritus Professor of History at that institution.*

## **HISTORY CORNER**

### **WHEN AMERICA ALMOST WENT TO WAR WITH BRITAIN OVER BRITISH GUIANA**

“In 1895 Britain and Venezuela had been in dispute over the border between the republic and British Guiana for half a century. But the matter had not become an issue until the discovery of gold in the disputed area prompted insistent offers of arbitration from the United States; and it did not become a crisis until the summer of 1895 when Richard Olney, the pugnacious new American Secretary of State, brought his country and Britain to the edge of a ludicrous war. In a boorish reassertion of the Monroe Doctrine, Olney ordered his ambassador in London to tell the British Government that the United States was ‘practically sovereign on this continent’ (which must have been news to Canadians, Mexicans and others), that political union between European and American states was ‘unnatural and inexpedient’ (news again to citizens of Canada and Newfoundland), and that the Latin American republics were ‘friends and allies’ of the United States for reasons of ‘geographical proximity’, ‘natural sympathy’ and ‘similarity of government institutions’ (news for atlas readers who could measure the distance between Chile and the US, for Latin Americans who naturally sympathised with their relations and co-religionists in Portugal, Spain and Italy, and for anyone who could appreciate the difference between dictatorship and democracy even when both types of regime called

themselves a republic).

“Lord Salisbury, Prime Minister for the third time, could not resist a condescending and ironic reply. He found Olney’s message so brash – even after President Cleveland had softened the verbiage – that he failed to restrain his natural causticity. The Monroe Doctrine, he declared, was theoretically sound, but it was not in the code of international law and could not be applied to the present situation; indeed the United States had no legitimate concern in the delimitation of the ‘frontier of a British possession which belonged to the Throne of England long before the Republic of Venezuela came into existence’. Cleveland erupted on reading the message and threatened to use force if Britain did not accept the American offer of arbitration. His action led to a frenzy of bellicose Anglophobia among press, politicians and people (especially Irish-Americans who offered 100,000 troops) so desperate to fight that they were unable to reflect how the Monroe Doctrine might be defended with their solitary modern battleship against the might of the Royal Navy. Theodore Roosevelt realised that American coastal cities would be bombarded, but he felt war would be worthwhile because the United States could seize Canada. It took the collapse of the stock market, mainly caused by the withdrawal of British investment, to sober the warmongers.

“In any case, British ministers, distracted by events in South Africa, were in no mood to fight. They backed down, agreed to arbitration, and were rewarded three years later when a commission, which included the American Chief Justice\*, accepted most of the British argument.”

From *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* by David Gilmour (Kipling had been living in the US at the time).

\*The commission – more correctly the Tribunal of Arbitration – consisted of five members: two appointed by Britain, namely the Lord Chief Justice of England and a Justice of Appeal; two appointed by Venezuela, namely the American Chief Justice and a Supreme Court judge; the fifth member was a distinguished Russian jurist unanimously chosen by the other four members.

## FACEBOOK UPDATED

(Contributed by alumnus Allan Lee, Toronto)

I am trying to take Facebook to the next level by eliminating the electronic barrier that separates me from my readers. Therefore every day I go out on the street and tell the passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel, what I have done the night before, and what I will do with my day. I give them pictures of my friends, my family, my dog and me gardening and spending time in my pool. I also listen to the intimate details they disclose about their daily lives, and tell them I love them.

It works: I already have three persons following me – two policemen and a psychiatrist.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES, FACTUAL FACTS AND MYTHICAL MYTHS

“History is a series of lies on which we agree.” – Napoleon (quoted in *1000 Years of Annoying the French* by Stephen Clarke).

“Good politics is making people believe they’re free.” – *Ibid.*

“Conceptions of the past are far from stable. They are perennially revised by the urgencies of the present. ...History is never a closed shop or a final verdict. It is always in the making.” – Arthur Schlesinger (quoted by alumnus Clem Secharan in *Mother India’s Shadow over El Dorado*).

Behind every great man is a surprised woman. – Anon.

Politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other. – Anon.

In 1939–45 India (then including what is now Pakistan and Bangladesh) raised the largest all-volunteer army in history – 2.5 million.

“It is fanciful...that the red lines on the floor of the [House of] Commons Chamber are two sword lengths apart. There is indeed a rule that a member speaking from the front row of benches...should not step over the lines; but there is no record of a time when members were permitted to bring swords into the Chamber.” –

Robert Rogers and Rhodri Walters in *How Parliament Works*.

“A more frequent error is the description of Westminster as ‘the mother of parliaments’. When John Bright coined the phrase in 1865 he was referring to *England* as the mother of parliaments.” – *Ibid*.

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### DIARY DATES

<i>SAT 21 NOV</i>	<i>AGM</i>	3 pm, High Commission
<i>SUN 31 JAN 2016</i>	<i>ANNUAL DINNER</i>	Bunga Raya Restaurant, Thornton Heath

### WEBSITES

UK Association: [www.qcoga.org.uk](http://www.qcoga.org.uk) and [www.qcsponsorshipprogramme.com](http://www.qcsponsorshipprogramme.com)  
High Commission: [www.guyanahclondon.co.uk](http://www.guyanahclondon.co.uk)  
Guyana Association:  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Queens-College-Old-Students-Association/107462024045?ref=ts>  
New York Chapter: [www.qcguyanaalumny.org](http://www.qcguyanaalumny.org)  
South Florida Chapter: [www.qcalumnifl.org](http://www.qcalumnifl.org)  
Toronto Chapter: [www.qcalumnitoronto.com](http://www.qcalumnitoronto.com)

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