



# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2003

**The Queen's College of Guyana Association (UK)**

(Registered Charity No. 801250)

No. 27

## SUMMER REUNION—SUNDAY 13TH JULY

St John's Nature Garden, 386 Clapham Road, London SW9  
Garden Party & Barbecue 2 to 6.30 pm. Dancing in Church Hall 6.30 to 9 pm  
Admission £15

### QC ADMIN BLOCK AND AUDITORIUM COMPLETED

At the beginning of the summer term, QC students gathered in the new auditorium for the first general assembly to be held on the school premises since the disastrous fire of November 1997. The reconstruction project had been beset by many delays, the last occurring when the latest in a line of contractors departed for Canada without completing the work! The December 2002 deadline (*Newsletter* No 26, December 2002) was accordingly missed. After several weeks delay, the Ministry of Education approved the amount required to complete the outstanding work. The admin block is not yet occupied, but this is probably due to the on-going, nationwide teachers' strike.

(An aerial photograph of the school taken in January is enclosed for persons who receive the *Newsletter* by post; email recipients, other than non-QC alumni, will already have received two aerial photographs in colour.)

### ASSOCIATION DONATES £5000 TO QC HISTORY & SOCIOLOGY TEXTBOOKS BEING SOURCED

As a registered charity, it is necessary for the Association to make donations in keeping with its charitable objects as set out in the constitution. Accordingly a donation of £5000 was recently made to QCOSA for use by the school at the headmistress's discretion. It is understood that part of the money will be spent for purchasing six printers for the Information Technology section.

A request from the headmistress for history and sociology textbooks is presently being handled by (Chairman) Peter Fraser and (Committee Member) Leila Persaud. It is intended to have these delivered in time for the new academic year.

### SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

The second biennial QCA–BHSA Dinner-Dance, held in October 2002 at the New Connaught Rooms, realised a profit of £2138, which was shared equally between the Associations.

Numbers at the Annual Dinner, held as usual at the New Loon Fung Restaurant in London's Chinatown, were down on the previous year (149 as against 190+), possibly due to the event being held only seven weeks after the Dinner-Dance. For the second consecutive year we were accommodated in the main restaurant, and were not therefore restricted to a (cramped) maximum of 120 persons as in earlier years. A profit of £1651 was realised.

### SALVETE

We welcome **Charlie Lee-Ting** (QC late 40s–mid 50s) as a new *Life* member .

**Navin Sahadeo** and **Jai Ramcharan** have converted to *Life*.

### VALETE

Col. **Harry B Hinds**, MSM, EM, (GDF, ret'd), (QC 58–65), *b.* 7.10.46, *d.* Jan 03 in Guyana (see obit. below); **Ivor O Smith**, CMG, OBE, (QC late 'teens'–early 20s), *b.* 13.12.07, *d.* Mar 03 in British Columbia (see obit. below). To the bereaved relatives, the Association tenders its sincerest condolences.

## **OBITUARIES**

### **COL. HARRY BASIL HINDS**

[This obituary is based on the eulogy delivered by David Granger at the funeral service at St Andrew's Kirk, Georgetown, 29.1.03.]

Harry Hinds devoted his entire adult life to the defence of Guyana. He was among the first intake of young Guyana Defence Force officers at the time the Force was established in the run up to independence. Educated at Queen's College (1958–65) Harry joined the Cadet Corps at the same time as a number of those destined to achieve senior rank in the GDF, including (Brigadier) David Granger, (Major) Azad Ishoof, (Lt-Col) Fairbairn Liverpool, (Col.) Carl Morgan, (Col.) Desmond Roberts and (retired Chief-of-Staff, Major-General) Joe Singh. In March 1966, he followed David and Joe to Mons Officer Cadet School (MOCS)<sup>1</sup> here in the UK.

At Mons, Harry won the appointment of Under Officer, Salerno Company, which in British armyspeak meant that he was the best 'overseas gentleman'. In 1967 he attended the mortar officers' course at the School of Infantry. This led to him establishing the GDF mortar platoon, which played a crucial role in 'Operation Climax', launched on 19th August 1969 to preserve Guyana's territorial integrity in the New River Triangle.<sup>2</sup> Further courses included parachute training (UK, 1968)—the first GDF officer to qualify as a parachutist—the Junior Command and Staff Course at Warminster (1971), the Army Staff Course at Camberley (1984), and the Civil–Military Strategy for Internal Development Course in Florida.

Harry Hinds was the founder and first Commanding Officer of the GDF Coast Guard, establishing the maritime base not so much from scratch as from rubble: reconstructing the old BG Airways ramp at a time when the national economy had started to slide. Smuggling was rife at the time, but Harry never gave in to the temptation of dishonesty. He was a man of probity, principle, and integrity in a country sinking into a mire of corruption, which he saw could undermine military morale and state security.

Subsequently the first military commissioner of the Civil Defence Commission, Harry's contribution to military affairs was recognised with the award of the Military Service Medal, Efficiency Medal, Border Defence Medal, Independence Medal and Commemoration Medal. In David Granger's words: 'Military worth, though, is not measured in metres of medal ribbon; it is, rather, a measure of ideas, and it is for ideas, not awards, that he will be remembered.'

*[Harry Hinds, born 7th October 1946, died January 2003.]*

<sup>1</sup> Mons was established during World War II to train the extra officers required for the army. It was closed (probably in the late 60s soon after Harry passed through) following the reduction in the army's strength.

<sup>2</sup> The story I remember hearing shortly after the event was that when the GDF landed at first light, taking the Surinamers by surprise, the mortar platoon fired a few high explosive bombs into the bush near to the camp, so as not to cause gratuitous casualties. This was enough to cause precipitate withdrawal of the insurgents. —*Ed.*

### **IVOR OTTERBEIN SMITH**

Born in Georgetown on 13th December 1907, Ivor Smith attended Queen's College before proceeding to England where he took a commercial course. On his return, Ivor joined the Colonial Civil Service, rising through the ranks to become Commissioner for the Cayman Islands in 1946. In 1952 Ivor was transferred back to his native British Guiana as Colonial Secretary (No 2 to the Governor), perhaps the first (and only?) local to hold that post, normally reserved for a UK Civil Servant. In 1960 Ivor deputised for the Governor as Officer Administering the Government—'OAG' in the colonial parlance. For his services, Ivor was awarded the OBE in 1952 and CMG in 1963. He retired to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1967.

Ivor was a competent footballer in his younger days: he appears in a photograph of the 1927 'Past and Present Students' team reproduced on Page 211 of Laurence Clarke's *QC Book of Records*.

Ivor, whose wife pre-deceased him, is survived by his daughters Marguerite (previously married to QC old boy David Bernard), who cared for him in his declining years, and Jennifer, and son Brian (another old boy).

### **THANKS/CONGRATULATIONS TO**

**James Chin**, owner of the New Loon Fung Restaurant (and Loon Fung Supermarket) for his generous donation to the Association's funds;

**Eden Gajraj**, founding member and immediate Past President of the Toronto Association, for being awarded the Queen Elizabeth 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Medal in recognition of his significant contribution to 'compatriots, community and

Canada' (this is the third medal that Eden has received for his service to the community);

**Derek Hugh**, who needs no introduction, on becoming the first District Grandmaster for the newly-created South-East Caribbean District of the Masonic Degree known as Mark Master Masons;

Vice-President **Trevor Phillips**, OBE, for his appointment as Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality;

and old boy **Bryn Pollard**, CCH, (Senior Counsel, Guyana) on his election to the post of Chairman of the Inter-American Juridical Committee of the Organisation of the American States.

### “OLE MUDDA SPENCA’.”

(Abridged, from *Scenes and Sketches of Demerara Life* by J van Sertima\*, The *Argosy* Press, 1899.)

The old lady is a delightful companion. She comes round to the house regularly every week, and we are pleased to see her. More so the little ones, who crowd around her at the entrance and welcome her warmly.

In her hand-basket is some guava jelly, or preserved tamarind or some other *confetti* for the children. These she makes herself, as also cassava bread which she supplies to us and other households. She prides herself on the quality and cleanliness of her ware; and in truth hers is no idle boast. Her conversation, the memories of the long dead past, is simply charming. And what an engaging *raconteuse* she is!

She was born a slave, about fifteen years before Emancipation, but was freed in her infancy by her father, a gentleman of Dutch descent who made his fortune as a coffee planter. Occasionally, I go to her house—a little cottage in Freeburg, with a number of fruit trees in the foreground. Here she showed me, once, her manumission papers which she carefully keeps in the recesses of a very large trunk. Although time-stained, they are in a tolerable state of preservation; and she is very proud of them because of old association sake. Among other things in this formidable looking repository of hers are a quantity of old books: first editions, French and Dutch volumes, and old letters and MSS. She keeps them scrupulously clean, and is so often among them with her hand broom and towel that perforce roaches and other vermin have to seek sanctuary in other situations. But she cannot read those old volumes herself. Her eyes are dim. There is only one book that she reads, through her silver-rimmed spectacles: a big, heavy one with clear, bold type—the Holy Bible. Her favourite passages are the conversion of Saul and the sufferings of the Master, wherefrom she fashions her own mode of life.

A fine type of mulatto is “Ole Mudda Spenca’”. She stoops slightly in her walk, but is not feeble in spite of her seventy-five years. Her hair is long and soft and glossy and black. Here and there, however, some white hairs are discernible. Early every morning she gets these pulled out by her serving girl, Charlotte, whom she rescued as an ill-fed infant from her mother. Charlotte cooks for “Mudda Spenca’” and assists her in bread- and cake-making. And she is “cou’tinin’ to a policeman”, of whom the old lady frequently warns her: “Take care of what you are about with the policeman. You are coming in to sleep very late now I notice.”

“Eh, eh, mum, is nutt’n. De cou’tinin’ is quite honourable.”

“I hope so; we will see.”

“Oh Mudda Spenca’! Ent he write me address letter? Ent he gie me a engage’ ring wid two stones?”

“That’s not all my girl. I hope you don’t kiss too much.”

“Oh Mudda Spenca’, you mek me laugh. We doesn’t kiss at all. Ent you know black people doan kiss?”

Whereat the old lady grows apprehensive, and forthwith lectures Charlotte, racily narrating what has occurred in her time with engaged people, and what has happened with engaged people since her time, and what will happen with engaged people in the future if they give dalliance too much rein; ending up with a sermon taken from Proverbs: “... if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.”

Mudda Spenca’ was once young herself. She still retains some traces of the beauty of her younger days—the late fifties, when Demerara was as gay as a butterfly, when dinner parties and balls were weekly features of society, when men’s words were more valuable than some Bills of Exchange in these decadent days. When not kept in private houses, the old lady tells me, balls were kept in the “Concert Room”, a large building (the ground floor of which was used as a wheelwright’s shop) which used to stand somewhere in the vicinity of the Hand-in-Hand building. The old lady was one of the many belles in those happy days, which youngsters hope will come again, but which oldsters assert are forever gone. Didn’t the masculine moths used to hover around her in a kind of delirium? And didn’t she used to make them pay for her smiles? The little cottage at Freeburg was a present from Captain S—— of the barque M—— that used to “run” to Sandbach Parker.

Those dear old memories! Balls were balls then. The ladies were always attired in costumes new and expensive. Dressmakers always had their hands full. Grand old institutions those balls were—more free and easy certainly than present-day apologies, but more lasting in their delight. The creole ladies were more Frenchy in their dress and manners, vivacious, gay—*dégagées*, if you like. In their vocabulary there was no such word as bashfulness. The gentlemen, European and Creole, were quite sticklers for deportment and courtesy, now, alas! lost to the younger generation which, as some worthy mournfully observed the other day, comes into your drawing room with a half-a-bit cigar in its mouth. Those dear old days which still linger pleasantly in Mudda Spenca's memory!

But now Time, impartial and unrelenting has changed all that, for better or for worse. Mudda Spenca' loves her church now with all the ardour which she used to associate with the vanity of her youth. Her worldly pleasures are at an end. Good "Ole Mudda Spenca'" has chosen the narrow path in the evening of her days, full of faith and full of hope, that, when her life's work is ended, she will be ushered into that happy haven where the weary are at rest.

\*\*\*\*\*

\* The author was an old boy of Queen's. An episode in the book is entitled 'Reminiscences of Queen's College'. Unfortunately, the copy from which the above is taken was damaged, and that episode did not survive intact.

### TO THE 'BUGHOUSE'<sup>1</sup> BRIGADE'

(The following, slightly edited, email was recently received from Central High School old boy Godfrey Chin who lives in Canada.)

Am flattered that my Nostalgia 101—*Guyana's Men Fashion Yesteryear*—was read and shared at the Queen's College Alumni Association literary evening in Toronto—and was enthusiastically received. I cannot believe that in February 2003 I have finally reached an audience at that distinguished Academy of Learning on Thomas Road—even though it was the 'old farts' 50 years later.

My 73.5% at common entrance in April 1948 earned me a scholarship at Central High, and my teenage attitude towards my more fortunate 'bug-housed' friends became Hatfield-McCoy rivalries, and have remained so since.

At football, the Central scrappy, undergeared team would walk up Camp St for a double figure trouncing by the QC champions, and the only delight would be the camaraderie at the mauby and bun feast at Mount Eagle (Regent & Camp St) when members of both sides—victors & losers—piconged and tantalised. Always felt the home team looked like sports model 'jackass' zebras, in their show-off striped yellow and black jerseys<sup>2</sup>. Our team were more appropriately dressed, each member in a different colour shirt (like dress-down Fridays), which reflected a total absence of teamwork, as everyman played his own game. We were practising and developing, then, INDIVIDUALITY & SELF PRESERVATION.

Attendance to the annual QC Swim Meets at the GFC pool to watch your 'skinny Johnny Weissmullers' compete for medals was a treat—but a gym with weights would have certainly helped alyea Collegians with your Gandhi physiques.<sup>3</sup> Physical Fitness should have been on your school curriculum.

The privilege to attend your Annual Prefects' Christmas Party was equal to a Royal Invitation, even though your students were all 'double left-footed'. Social Dancing needed to be on your school's curriculum as well.

And the long 'Bataan' walk from the cricket pavilion to the school's kitchen for 'tea' during cricket, was worthwhile—if only the hosts allowed us guest teams the first scramble at the delicious sandwiches. Etiquette should also have been on the school's curriculum.

The bughouse made you guys feel like governors—but its wide sunshade made the entire school look like a colony of albinos. A sauna with sun-roof ought to have been included in the school facilities!

But I must give you College Caesars your due. Your Annual School Magazine was a literary masterpiece, and my favorite feature and envy was the 'Picong Page'<sup>4</sup> which was a free-for-all exchange of jibes and friendly tease! My only criticism was the quality of the printing page layout. The School should have had 'printing' included in their curriculum.

At your Annual Athletic Sports at Bourda, every Georgetown youth attended to see an Olympiad of the Nation's Future Athletic Stars. While Hamilton Green won the mile, we the handsome guys from Smyth St had the girls from Bishops', St Joseph's, and St Rose's cooing with delight and admiration. The Tall Dark and Handsome Centralites outshone your college nerds! Combined with Saints', the Colleges did beat a Combined High Schools team in 1954, with Rustic Fung, Ron Willock, Skip Roberts, Maxie Bacchus and Julian Archer. The St Stanislaus allies—Charlie Stayers, Joseph Castanheiro, Tony Clark and Ivor Newman saved your skins.

But without Saints', the next year Central upset QC to win the Chin Cup for cricket—June 1955. Godfrey was at last redeemed!

Please convey my BEST WISHES to all the QUEEN'S COLLEGIANS of yesteryear.

—GODC

\*\*\*\*\*

<sup>1</sup> 'Bughouse' was the name given to the 'cork-hats', or pith helmets, which were part of the school uniform (along with school ties) even before white shirts and khaki trousers (and skirts).

<sup>2</sup> Godfrey's memory is faulty. The jerseys were patterned with large yellow and black squares.

<sup>3</sup> The author obviously never came across J I F (Big John) Phillips, who could do a 'chin-up' using a pinch grip, nor Teddy Rickford (to name but two champion swimmers).

<sup>4</sup> On Dit?

### FIFTH DIASPORA DIALOGUE AT THE HIGH COMMISSION QC OLD BOYS PROFESSORS DABYDEEN AND SEECHARAN TALK RESPECTIVELY ABOUT GUYANA'S FIRST POET AND LORD (JOCK) CAMPBELL

*[The brainchild of John Mair, supported by High Commissioner Lal Singh, the Diaspora Dialogues have been popular events at the High Commission. John has managed to inveigle prominent members of the Guyanese community here in the UK to give of their valuable time to participate in these discussions, which have invariably been both entertaining and educational. John, son of an English father and Guyanese mother, almost went to Queen's—he was awarded a scholarship to the school in 1961, but did not take it up as the family went to live in the UK. This report is an abridged version of that written by John—under his nom de plume Bill Cotton—for Stabroek News in January, and is reproduced with his kind permission.]*

The fruits of a great educational system are fine minds. Two Guyanese examples were on display at the High Commission in London last week: Professors **David Dabydeen** and **Clem Seecharan**. They conducted the fifth of the 'Diaspora Dialogues' to a rapt audience of fifty, ably chaired by another fine Guyanese mind, [QCA Chairman] **Dr Peter Fraser**. It was an event which reached for the intellectual sky—and often touched it. Both chose subjects of study and discussion that were well outside the Guyanese ethnic box. Dabydeen dealt with Guyana's first poet the mulatto Egbert Martin and his work, and Seecharan the life and times of Lord Campbell of Eskan, formerly Chairman of Bookers.

Clem's book on him is due to be published very soon by the UWI Press. It is a labour of love based on many interviews with Jock Campbell and much new research. Like the good historiographer he is, Clem refused to take the intellectually easy route of categorising Jock as a 'white imperialist who raped the country'. Instead he has explored the subtle nuances of his and his family's connections with the colony, Jock's own doubts about his role in the plantation economy, his Fabian socialism, and his friendship with Cheddi Jagan. Seecharan, who has just been promoted to Professor of Caribbean History at London Metropolitan University (formerly University of North London) was most moving when reading a passage from his introduction which vividly recalled his own childhood growing up on Rose Hall estate in Berbice, where he 'surveyed the cane from our verandah' and sampled 'the aroma of burnt cane and boiled cane juice'. He saw Guyana as no El Dorado but one where the sins of yesterday and its unique plantation system were being revisited on the citizens of today in the continuing racial tensions.

In *Sweet Bitter Sugar*, Clem argues that Bookers was a 'state within a state' in the then British Guiana. Jock Campbell was its 'President' but a benevolent one, with vision. For example, he refused to join the politically contrived 'Axe the Tax' panic about the 1962 Kaldor PPP Budget. He'd heard it called 'radical' but said 'What's wrong with that, what have the Guianese got to be conservative about?' Seecharan felt it was only because of the confidence gained in the last two decades by West Indian scholars that they were now able to tackle 'difficult' subjects; but he did accept that being a scholar in the diaspora meant he'd had the necessary distance from the ethnic cauldron of Guyana to be able to write a book about a man—a white man—like Campbell, from a sympathetic viewpoint.

Dabydeen in his contribution paid tribute to men of several different hues. Firstly, his friend the late Desmond Hoyte, whom he had seen just before his death. Hoyte he said was 'urbane', and, through the setting up of the Guyana Prize when President, had realised that 'Imagination is central to development.' Hoyte would be missed by the thinkers of Guyana. Dabydeen also paid tribute to Cheddi Jagan, whose collected letters he was just editing: among them, a short letter from the British Governor, dated 9th October 1953, suspending him as Chief Minister of the colony. The British troops were on their way and Cheddi to prison. Jagan was not to waste his time during

incarceration. Dabydeen produced his only known poem, written on toilet paper in the Mazaruni prison. Who knows how many others have been lost. Dabydeen's *roman-à-clef* of Cheddi will be published in the future.

Before that, he turned his critical attention to Egbert Martin, the first Guyanese poet. He lived from 1862–1890. His major work 'Leo's Poetical Works', published in 1883, is scarce—very scarce. Just one copy remains in existence—in the New York Public Library. Egbert, self-taught, was a creature of his (colonialist) time with the book dedicated, in Latin, to the Governor of British Guiana. To Dabydeen, Martin had found and was able to convey the landscape of Guyana, 'the sorrel and the mango', whilst using the idioms of Victorian poetry; Dabydeen, himself in the van of contemporary West Indian and European poetry, rated Martin a major poetic talent, and not just a Guyanese one.

It was a stimulating evening, one brimful of the fruits of scholars. It made one proud to be Guyanese—wherever we live.

### HOWLER FROM HOME

From the National Trust of Guyana website, under 'Historic Cummingsburg': 'Some streets such as Waterloo Street; named after Admiral Wellington's great battle and victory ...'

### DIARY DATES

**13 JULY** *Summer Reunion, St John's Nature Garden, Clapham.*  
4 AUG 'Last Lap Lime', Guyana Schools Alumni Associations Caribana event, Shangri-La, Esna Park Drive, Toronto. Contact Leyland Muss, (001) 905 666 0237, lmuss@rogers.com.  
7 SEPT St Rose's Reunion & Lunch, usual venue, contact Pam Waters 01787 227316.  
9–13 OCT ICQC 2003 Reunion and meeting, South Florida. Contact Rod Westmaas (001) 305 400 7231, rawestmaas@aol.com.  
**7 NOV** *AGM.*  
**LATE NOV/EARLY DEC: ANNUAL DINNER**

### COMMITTEE CONTACTS

*Chairman:* Dr Peter D Fraser (pd\_fraser@hotmail.com)  
82 Larden Road, LONDON W3 7SX. (H) 020 8743 7370  
*Hon. Secretary:* C Ian C Wishart (iwishart@eemua.co.uk)  
2 Prince Consort Drive, CHISLEHURST, Kent BR7 5SB  
(H) 020-8467 4028; (W) -7796-1293; (Fx) -1294 [NOTE CHANGE]  
*Hon. Treasurer:* Mark Dalgety (markdalgety@aol.com)  
101 Hatfield Mead, MORDEN, Surrey SM4 5PG (H&Fx) 020-8715 3119  
*(Co-opted)* J Mark Adamson  
18 Clitheroe Road, Stockwell, LONDON SW9 9DZ. (H) 020 7274 8380  
Miss Leila D Persaud (leila.persaud@which.net)  
17 Mona Rd, Peckham, LONDON SE15 2JA. (H) 020 7639 4063  
H Dominic Gaskin (dom@gaskinh.freemove.co.uk)  
5 Brambling Court, 213-215 Selhurst Road, South Norwood, LONDON SE25 6XY. (H) 020 8771 2407  
Anthony C L Joseph (acljqc75@aol.com)  
58 Daneby Rd, Catford, LONDON SE6 2QH. (H) 020 8695 6374  
A Marc Storey (marcstorey@hotmail.com)  
12 Meadow Gardens, EDGWARE, Middx HA8 9LH. (H) 020 8958 1176

**QC WEBSITES (Board of Governors; New York Assoc.):** www.queenscollege.org; www.qcguayana.org.

\*\*\*\*\*

**VISIT DOMINIC GASKIN'S JEWELRY SHOP CARIBBEAN TOPAZ** 1468 London Road, Norbury (immediately south of railway bridge), London SW16 4BU, Tel/Fax 020 8765 4681. **www.caribbeantopaz.com.**