

PREFACE

Extracts from a letter written by Swift Colin Dozey, only son of Catherine Amelia Vernede and Edward Colin Dozey to his eldest child Catherine Wendy Dozey in the early 1980's.

“ The majority of people are curious as to who and what their antecedents were, hence my visits to Cochin to ascertain and verify my mother's narrations of the illustrious background of the Vernede Family and of the gracious and glorious lives they led around about the end of the 19 th Century and upto the time of your Great-grandfather's (Samuel James Vernede) death and a little after.

Knowing that you would be interested, I have compiled a short record of incidents in the lives of the Vernedes that have gone before, from a book titled; “ The History of Cochin” by the Dutch Author R V Vann and from information so kindly furnished by Manuel Rosario, an old Spanish inhabitant of Cochin.

R V Vann, garnered authentic information from the archives of the Cochin Govt. of events and happenings in Cochin after 1795. Events before 1795 were obtained from old 'news sheets', the old Port Log and from old inhabitants who had kept notes of happenings which were passed down to them by their forebears.

Vann appears to have thoroughly investigated the authenticity of the incidents and events he has set down in print. They tally with the information given to me by the local historian Manuel Rosario. Vann's book is a record consisting of 250 pages and his references about the Vernedes are spread haphazardly throughout so I have endeavoured to place them in chronological order.

On my first visit to Cochin I enquired at the Records Office and was told that all the records were mislaid or destroyed during World War II . The story goes that this Office was taken over as a Billet by the RAF and that after the war no records could be traced. The loss was attributed to the careless manner in which the RAF bundled up the records and stored them , resulting in the records being misplaced ! (?)

On a subsequent visit, I was able, by sheer luck, to gather all the information I wanted, though, through most unexpected channels.

The events and incidents which I quote have been taken from the 'book'(shown in parenthesis) and from what my parents and others have related from time-to-time. I have quoted conversations with others from memory, though not verbatim.”

I have prepared the above as a Preface for the work my father Swift Colin put together for his children and which Mr Raoul Vernede wishes to place on his website.

Brian Keith Colin Dozey,
Grandson of Catherine Amelia Dozey (nee Vernede).
December 2011, Thames Ditton , Surrey, UK.

MY VISITS TO COCHIN TO TRACE OUR ANCESTRY.

My mother would often relate to my sister Doris, to me, and, later, also to your mother, stories about Cochin, and the Vernedés. We thought that these 'tales' were a bit far-fetched. I quote some of her outstanding statements.

"Each Vernedé child had a paid governess".

"The Vernede children were never sent to school because 'Papa' thought that the schools were not good enough for the Vernedés" (schools in Cochin, at that time, may have been far below standard.)

"French, English, and other subjects were taught, in the home, by separate tutors. Scripture lessons were taken in the Zealand House chapel by the 'Kerk' Padre, daily. The medium of instructions being in English and French". (very few inhabitants spoke Dutch after about 40 years of British rule.)

"The Zealand House was staffed by about 30 domestics. ('freed' slaves)".

She spoke of the banquets, dinners, dances, and parties held in "Zealand House," and at "Manad"; of the picnics and boating excursions on the Cochin back-waters, around their islands, and up the Always river to their Always Estate. I did not wholly discredit her 'stories', though I had my doubts. Dad, sensing my doubts, said - "Son, your mother came from a very rich and noble French family." This was confirmed when a very old Catholic nun called

at 16 Grant Road, some years ago, and asked me if I was the son of Catherine ^{Amelia} Vernede. On receiving an affirmative answer, she gave me a résumé of the Vernede family, and invited me to stay at the 'Bishop's Palace' should I ever visit Cochin. Uncle Oscar also confirmed mother's narrations when he returned from Africa. All this 'hearsay' aroused my curiosity and I went to Cochin to enquire about my ancestors. On arrival there, for the first time, I called at the 'Bishop's Palace' but gathered no more information than ^{had} already given to me by the old nun. Enquiries from old citizens drew a blank. Nobody ~~was~~ had even heard of the Vernedes. They had been forgotten. Enquiries at the Cochin Records Office also drew a blank. I was told that all 'records' had been misplaced or destroyed during the last war (?). I visited all Protestant Churches - without success. Except for the fact, that the Vernedes had lived in the 'Bishop's Palace', there was no evidence that they had been of any importance in Cochin.

On a subsequent visit - in connection with my timber business - I went to the Always Saw Mills to inspect 'shooks' which were ready for despatch to I.L.F.D., Chirla. Whilst talking to the old Manager, an old man interrupted our conversation, speaking in, what seemed to me, a strange 'lingo'. On enquiry, he informed me - in perfect English - that they were conversing in a 'base' mixture of Arabic and Malayalam,

only spoken by a very few old 'Moplahs'. I asked him if he, by chance, knew anything of a Vernedé family ^{etc} that had lived in Cochin, roundabout 1900. His answer was immediate - "Vernedés, yes; I worked in their Always Estate. They left many years ago. The place is in ruins, and the lands have been divided." He could give me no more information. I then told him that I had enquired at every Protestant Church but had not traced any records of the Vernedés. On learning that I had not visited St. Francis Church, (I had not been to this church as the name indicated a catholic institution) he said that though St. Francis Church had been a R.C. Church during Portuguese occupation, the Dutch had not sacked or burnt it, but had consecrated it as their 'Kerk'. (because they also revered St. Francis, and because Vasco-de-Gama had been buried in the Church). He told me to contact Manuel Rosario, the Superintendent of the Church, who was well known as the local 'historian' of Cochin.

~~The~~ The old moplah Manager of the Saw Mill then gave me details of the history of the 'Moplahs'; took me up the Always river, and showed me the 'Vernede baths'. There was nothing left of the bungalow, or the corridors, referred to by Vann (see page.....).

Returning to Cochin (about 20 miles), and ^{on} being directed by the hotel clerk, I went to the 'Kerk' and asked for the Superintendent; was directed to his house in Dutch Town (almost a replica of a Dutch Village). On arrival at his residence - a beautiful

'Dutch' cottage-I saw an old man, (white) of about 50 years (?), having a shave, Wishing him politely, over the half-doors, I asked him if he could give me some information from the "Kerk" records. His reply was curt, and rude - "I'm sorry, I'm very busy till Sunday, see me at the Vestry on Monday". This was on a Friday afternoon. I persisted, asking him if he knew anything of the Vernedes as I was the son of Catherine Amelia Vernede. With an astonished expression, he opened his mouth, looked at me for quite sometime, then shouted - "Rosa". An old lady (also white) came into the front room and they started babbling in Spanish, repeating the name 'Vernede', over, and over again. Opening the half-doors, he kissed me on both cheeks - soap - suds and all - caught both my hands, and literally dragged me into his home, and into a chair. Composing himself, and towelling his face, he said - "I'm so sorry, why did you not mention the name Vernede in the first instance". After giving me a sumptuous tea, and treating me as if I were a prince, (I was most embarrassed) he remarked - "what a coincidence, I was reading about your family just before I started shaving. There's your family history on the desk beside you". The book was - 'The History of Cochin'. Opening the book, he read a few passages and promised to obtain a copy from Pierce Leslie & Coy. As I intended leaving for Bangalore that night, I requested him to send the book by post. He bluntly refused to

obtain a copy unless I stayed over for the Sunday morning service at the 'Kerk', and as he was adamant, I had to agree. Bright and early on Sunday morning he picked me up at the 'Malabar Hotel', took me to the 'Kerk', and introduced me to the older members of the congregation, already assembled, saying - "Meet Colin Vernede Dozey, grandson of Samuel Vernede" (the 'addition' to my name was his 'bright idea'). From their expressions, I felt that they had either heard of the Vernede family, or had known them in person.

The interior of St. Francis Church reminded me of some of the old Parish Churches in England. Old fashioned, carved, high-backed pews - each with a little door, and small lockers for bibles and prayer books, and, in addition, old fashioned 'Punkas' (fans) hung from the roof - one set to each pew - and were connected by ropes and pulled by a 'punka wallah' with a rope attached to the last punka. A brass tablet, on the floor in front of the altar, indicated the place where the famous Portuguese explorer, Vasco-de-Gama's body had been buried. His remains were later exhumed by the Dutch and sent to Portugal.

A few minutes before the service started, Manuel Rosario led me to the pew directly in front of the pulpit and told me to sit at the end of this pew, saying - "Your mother sat there when she was a young girl." The Padre, a young Scot, during his sermon,

I was recently told, by a resident of Cochin, that St. Francis Church was taken over some years ago by the Syrian Christians and has been thoroughly renovated. I hope that they have not destroyed the charming old-world-look of the church.

A.T.O

spoke of 'the good in man', quoting Samuel Vernede who had done so much for the people of Cochin. (This had, no doubt, been ^{engineered} enquired by Manuel Rosario. The Padre could not have been conversant with the history of the Vernedes). I felt all eyes cast in my direction, and to crown it all, the Padre said - "Samuel Vernede is here with us in spirit, his grandson is here with us, in person, and is sitting in the pew, where his mother sat, many, many years ago". I've never been more embarrassed than I was during that service. (Manuel Rosario and his wife - previously Roman Catholics, had been converted by the Dutch)!

After the service, I was invited to lunch at the 'mans' (picture enclosed). Some of the Elders, elderly parishioners, and Manuel Rosario and his wife were there. The Malayali lunch was super. (spiced fish prepared between banana leaves, banana chips and banana 'parpads', plus a variety of west-coast dishes.) After lunch, to my surprise, beer and rum were produced, and the party went on till about 3 p.m.; Rosario, by then, was getting a bit 'tipsy'. His nostalgic mood made me decide to call it a day, and I took the old couple home, by taxi. They, as I had expected, made me stay for tea, during which he started recalling days of ^{yore} you, telling me that his father, a Spanish seaman, came to Cochin, left his ship and worked as a clerk in the Cochin dockyards, and being educated, became interested in the history of Cochin; collected information; past

and present, which he sold to a local press that published weekly news sheets. Notes and records, (collected by his ^(Rosario) father,) and news-sheet cuttings were given to him, and on going through these old documents, he also became interested, and, as a hobby, had started gathering further information from various sources: old news sheets, hearsay, and from ^{notes in} the old Port log. With the notes and records given to him, and the information he had gathered, he ^{compiled} ^{manuscripts} comprised them into a form. Much of this information had been passed on to author Vann, ^h Hence, his interest in this author's book - "The History of Cochin." Rosario had not read his ^{manuscripts} for many years, but promised to do so and send me any information he could trace of the Vernedes, plus any information from the 'Kerk' records. I got up to leave, but he made me sit down, saying - "I've got a lot more to tell you. I'm 92 years old, and my good wife is 75. (astounding! I would not have ^{given} guessed them more than 50). When a boy, I worked for your grandfather's firm for one rupee a month. I, later, married a Spanish girl, my wife, Rosa. When your uncle, Scipio Vernede, sold all the Vernede shares in Samuel Vernede's concern, I was drawing rupees twenty per month." On asking him how could he have afforded to support himself, a wife, and two children on Rs.20/-, he replied - "On this salary I was saving money. A Cochin rupee consisted of 20 'chakrams'

(small chips of pure silver), a chakram was worth 12 pice, and a pice - 20 'cowries' (tiny sea-shells). A good meal cost only 10 cowries." (work it out - 480 meals for one rupee. Fantastic!) . I was again about ready to leave when he said something to his wife in Spanish, and she, making me sit down again, produced a bottle of 'Fenni' (a local brew made from 'cashew', Dynamite!). In between large shots of this potent stuff ^{he} again started ruminating, and, by the time I left, we both were fairly drunk, Rosario on the verge of tears. When I eventually left, this sweet old couple saw me to my taxi, and bade me - "Adious Colin Vernede", giving me the very last copy of the "History of Cochin" available in Cochin, or elsewhere.

During my visits to their house, they spoke to each other in Spanish, but spoke to me in fluent English, without a trace of an identifiable accent. About a year later, I received a letter from the old lady saying that Manuel Rosario had peacefully passed away. It's a small world! Going to a saw mill in the 'blue', meeting two strangers who had both worked for your grand great-grandfather, and getting all the information I was looking for, seems like a ^{fairy} fancy tale. As said - "Truth is stranger than fiction."

VERNEDE WIVES.

Author Vann has recorded all the Vernede males, and their sons, in "The History of Cochin", but, except