

# THE KATU BRIDGE

Ask any Antonian to name the bridge that is dear to him, and the answer would undoubtedly be "The Katugastota Bridge" or better still "The Katu Bridge" as it was affectionately known.



This bridge still stands as a testimony to the splendid ambitions and fortitude to the men engaged in its construction. To Antonians, it is a bridge of memories, specially in the if you were a boarder. Being a boarder, specially in the senior years, one often tempted fate!! Going out of bounds was frowned on by College authorities, and at times the punishment for for breaking this rule was severe. But going out of bounds or, to use a better word from the lexicon of the day, 'scooting' was imbedded in the psyche of every border! Sooner or later one had to scoot! And the more daring the adventure, the better. Scooting to Katugastota for whatever reason, was often resorted to.



Once you made your way through the main gates at the entrance to the College and turned right onto the bridge, the road to freedom stretched before you. Most of us would scoot to

the "Pilawoos" restaurant for a much needed energy boost! Given the prevailing unhygienic conditions in that worthy Eating House, how we did not succumb to some vile infection, or come down with a horrible disease is a miracle and a mystery to this day. But then, we were Borders, and Borders very quickly learned the art of survival!

Some of us would go to the Sigiri Cinema to watch a movie. I often wandered at the time as to what was worse - getting caught for scooting and being punished for it or having your life blood sucked out of you whilst watching the film, by the bugs that infested the theatre seats. I called these voracious creatures 'Mini Draculas'!! And of course, in the theatre, those that were addicted to nicotine had the time time of their lives inhaling and exhaling as if there were no tomorrow, at a time when smoking was permitted everywhere!

The Moraes Pharmacy, the first shop on the right as one exited the bridge into Katugastota, was another favourite hangout. I usually made my way to the 'Fatima Studio' to meet my classmate Mohammed Ismail, whose father was the proprietor. While discussing academic matters I was entertained to tea and home made delicacies.

The more daring would meet their fair damsels and admirers at some preplanned rendezvous... Cupid was no respecter of persons, and even at that age we suffered from a bad case of love!!

I often obtained permission from Father Bruno to go to Katugastota for a haircut... permission which was not often grudgingly given because it was refused one went anyway! Anything was better than the haircuts at College in which your opinion as to how you wanted your bushy mane cut, did not matter to the College barber. He unceremoniously plonked you in a chair and ran the infernal machine through your fair with fiendish, almost sadistic delight! When you looked at the mirror in the dormitory, you shrieked in horror at the tonsorial nightmare that stared back at you. The barber at the shop in Katugastota was all charm and obeyed your every whim in anticipation of a healthy tip when he finished trying to make you look like Tony Curtis!

Apart from the engineering aspects of bridge building, schoolboys at St Anthony's were building bridges at strong, or even stronger than the old Katugastota bridge. Bridges which like our iconic bridge have stood the test of time with the passing of the years. These were called bridges of friendship and it is these bridges that have bonded us as Antonians. This is evident in the Antonian camaraderie and spirit of fellowship which is now legendary, wherever one finds the son of the old Alma Mata, be it in any corner of the globe, 'Rally Round the Banner' and 'Antonians will be there' resonates soundly in Antonian hearts and minds. The bridges of friendship we build at College have brought us thus far. As to where the roads may lead in the future, we will cross that bridge when we come to it.

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