

KB Ugadi Celebrations, Hartlepool, May 2007 (Part 1)

A personal view by Shrivatsa Desai

The Ugadi meting and the AGM of Kannada Balaga UK (KB) was held in Hartlepool, on 26th and 27th of May, 2007. What follows is a personal account of a member.



Day 1

Hartlepool, the monkey connection

“I don’t give a monkey’s where it’s held. I’ll attend Ugadi celebrations” said my friend. It isn’t as rude as it sounds. (See **Day 2**). I had rarely missed a KB meeting since it was founded. As four of us set off that Spring Bank Holiday Saturday morning, the air was cool, more like in March when actually Ugadi fell rather than the beginning of summer. Was the heat usually generated at the AGM going to compensate for it? We packed our overnight cases and set off from Doncaster not forgetting banana, water and the monkey-nuts for the journey.



HMS Trincomalee



*Hartlepool, KB, Trincomalee, and
Shiva connection*

Hartlepool is on the northeast coast of England, steeped in maritime history. As I parked my car the sun was shining above the ancient church on the headland of Hartlepool. “Where is the Borough Hall (the venue)?” I asked. “Follow the sari,” said my friend pointing to Kannada sister alighting from the Mercedes car! “We were welcomed by incense and the smell of SKC (sweet, *khara* and coffee)! It was time to meet old and new members of the Balaga. A cup full of coffee in my hand and a mouth full of Kannada words is, in my books, next to heaven! (ಸ್ವರ್ಗಕ್ಕೆ ಕಿಚ್ಚು ಹಚ್ಚೆಂದ ಸರ್ವಜ್ಞ!). Then we set off in four Skelten (not skeleton, thank God!) buses to visit the museum and the restored frigate *HMS Trincomalee*. It was a wonderful experience to see the fighting ship and then the frigate built in 1817 in Bombay by Jamsetjee Wadia for the Royal Navy. Named after the battle of Trincomalee near SriLanka, the boat had seen many visitors, but never before a line of helmeted Kannadigas till that day, as they went up and down the ship, still smelling of imperishable Malabar teak from India. Trincomalee is a corruption of Tamil *Thirukkona malai* (ತಿರುக்கೋಣ ಮலை) in the northeast of Ceylon where there was once a thousand pillared Shiva temple.



Picnic and adventure

Seeing the gunfire earlier on the quayside had rekindled our appetite and we all went to Summerhill visitor centre for a picnic and then physical activities in groups: archery, cricket, walking and orienteering, all free for the members. It didn't cost an arm and a leg, except to one cricketer, whose arm went into a sling next day (sorry, Sacchi!). For many of us from the Orient, orienteering at Summerhill was a novel experience. My friend loved it. Finding the sculpture of the spider at the far end of the 100-acre plot was his highlight. No arachnophobia here!

Song and dance

We returned to the venue for afternoon tea or coffee before changing into evening dress for the party. The location of changing rooms was announced and off they went, ladies, to dress up in their colourful sarees carefully packed for such occasion and waiting for this for months! Why not? Many men didn't move but didn't make a song and dance about their partners' wardrobe. Vijayendra and Sridevi entertained us with their Kannada songs before, during and after the disco dance (if you can call the gyrations and contortions of Kannada bodies that!). Dinner was followed by

Bollywood songs and more dance. We dragged our tired dancing feet to our accommodation.

Double-booking

Not all were lucky to get their chosen accommodation. When we called at our 'Lodge' we were told that we were short of one room! They had double-booked (which, in my experience, is common for out-patient clinics). How dare could they put more than one couple in a bed? *Ménages à trios* is not Kannada ! How we solved the problem and spent the night and outdid each other's snoring is a topic for another write up!

Let me finish with a quote from Bard of Dharwad (D R Bendre) who wrote the following lines (bar the last one!):

ಕನ್ನಡಿಗರ ಮಾತೆಲ್ಲವೂ ದೊಡ್ಡದೆಂಬ
ಮಾತು ನಿಜ; ಸುಳ್ಳಲ್ಲ!
ಅವರ ಕೃತಿಯು ಘನ, ಸ್ಮೃತಿಯು ಘನ,
ವಿಸ್ಮೃತಿಯು ಘನ
ಸ್ಮೃತಿತಪ್ಪಿದಾಗಿನ ಗೊರಕೆಯು ಘನ!



Orienteering