

Dr. W.A. Lamborn Fort Johnston, Nyasaland.

(By John Wilkes)

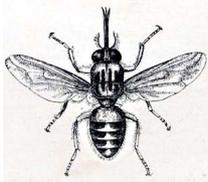
I first met Dr. Lamborn shortly after our arrival in Fort Johnston in August 1954. As a new Police Officer taking over command of the district I was initially briefed by the then District Commissioner, Arthur Mell, about people of note in the region. From what I had been told it seemed that this place had a wealth of history and I went on to find out a little more about some of the “Old Timers”.

In addition to the man in question, other characters of note included Cdr Cunningham (Ex RN), Mr. Shergold (who may also have been a Navy man), Sandy Green (ex Manager of the local ALC store) and Tommy Hughes (who had been pronounced a “Pirate” for raiding dhows on the lake and whose boat, The Pioneer (pictured right), had been confiscated and then lay moored on the river below Fort Johnston).



At this point I would just like to digress a little and mention one interesting point about some of these characters. On entering Fort Johnston there is a four direction signpost set on a large concrete plinth. This feature was referred to as “The Listening Post” and on making enquiries as to why it was so named, I learned that during the 1939-45 war Dr. Lamborn, Cdr Cunningham, Sandy Green and usually one other, sat with their backs to each other around the post, listening to the BBC concerning the conduct of the war and discussing its progress or otherwise. This, to me, was a first class example of what the old time Fort Johnston must have been like.

However to get back to Dr. Lamborn, I did manage to unearth a little of his earlier life. In the course of his work he appears to have been quite well travelled. He was in fact a Medical Entomologist specializing in the study of insects. Amongst many of his travels he spent a year, 1913-14, in the Southern Province of Nigeria studying entomological pests attacking the cocoa plantations there. I also believe that in 1920, or thereabouts, he carried out a study of anophelines mosquitos at the Malaria Bureau in the Malay States.



He was appointed as the Government Medical Entomologist in Nyasaland and amongst the many other studies in his field he conducted an invaluable survey of the tsetse fly and its increasing spread of disease southwards through the Protectorate mainly in the Northern and Central Provinces and he was largely responsible for almost eradicating this disease entirely.

In addition to his rather grand abode in Fort Johnston he also had a house across the river Shire up in the hills on the road to Namwera to which he frequently retired during very hot weather. I and my wife Pauline visited him there on a couple of occasions. It really was very pleasant indeed and a welcome break from the heat of the village and one glorious feature was a natural rock swimming pool. Cold but most inviting. He also had a small citrus fruit orchard just across the river from Fort Johnston but by the time we got there it was somewhat overgrown.

We didn't see a great deal of him during the day time unless I made a courtesy call on him at his house but almost without fail at around 4 pm he would come to the Fort Johnston club, always very smartly turned out, and chain smoke his way through a packet of eight TomTom cigarettes whilst watching tennis, or whatever else was going on. He took his leave of us at around 6 pm and went home. He was most definitely a man of very regular habit who tended to regiment his day. Almost without fail after getting home from the club he would have his evening meal, listen to the 8 pm news broadcast from the BBC Overseas Service and retire to bed at 8:30 pm.

His house in the town was quite close to the Police house and during the time we were there we got to know him reasonably well. During one of our chats with him he produced an old wind-up gramophone together with a case full of priceless 78 records. There were recordings by Dame

Clara Butt, Caruso, the complete set of Albert Records (he of Blackpool fame) and many more. Unfortunately he had no needles with which to play them but said that we were welcome to borrow them if we could devise some method of playing them. Light entertainment being at a premium in Fort Johnston we jumped at the chance and took them home. That evening I tried using a thorn from a sisal bush, of which we had an abundance, with outstanding success. One thorn played one side of a record and the collection provided us and Dr. Lamborn, who could hear them from his house, who was most appreciative with hours of extremely good entertainment.

We left Fort Johnston in December, 1955, and I did not come across him again. However, in closing I should mention that during our friendship with him he gave us a couple of jars of his home made Pickled Fish and we enjoyed it so much that Pauline asked if he would consider giving her the recipe. He did and for those of discerning taste I record it here:-

Pickled Chambo a la Lamborn

2 lbs filleted fish (should be Lake Nyasa Chambo but doubtless any fresh water bream would do?)

Dip in flour and fry. Put one and a half pints of vinegar in a saucepan, add one large sliced onion, one teaspoon of peppercorns and simmer until onions are cooked.

Mix one tablespoon of flour, cook with a tablespoon of curry powder and add a little cold vinegar. Add to the hot mixture and cook for a few minutes.

Place hot slices of fish in a jar and pour on the sauce.

Well seep for some weeks.

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*(Note: I should add that apart from my remarks concerning the type of fish this is a direct transcript of his hand written recipe)*



***John & Pauline Wilkes - 28<sup>th</sup> May 2016***