

# Desmier

## Family History Newsletter

June 1998

Issue No. 7

### Editors Note

*In this edition of the newsletter we find out more about the Desmier families that grew up in and around Tiruchirappali. I must thank Eugene Desmier for most of the material in this newsletter who, together with Winifred (Newsletter 6) has provided most of the information concerning the Southern Clan of the Desmier family. We start off with an introduction about Eugene and his family and then continue with an interesting article and photographs about Eugene's father Cyril. In the Christmas edition of the newsletter I will include articles and photographs of Cyril's other children and their families.*

### Rick Desmier

Eugene Desmier was born in Trichinopoly (now Tiruchirappali), South India. On leaving Campion High School he went to Technical College and after qualifying, joined the Southern Railways at its Headquarters Office in Madras. He emigrated to the UK in July 1960 with his parents (Cyril and Mary Desmier) and lived in Barnes. He joined British Railways in the Chief Signal and Telecommunications Engineers Design office. In 1968 he left British Rail to join the British Petroleum Company in the Electrical Engineering Department and then moved to the Chemicals Division of British Petroleum as a projects co-ordinator. His tours of duty included overseas visits to Europe, the Middle East and in January 1997 to New Delhi.

In July 1967, he married Gwen Desmier (daughter of Terence and Phyllis Desmier, see descendant chart in Newsletter 6) at Christ the King's RC Church, Wimbledon Park. They live in New Malden, Surrey with their two children Richard and Helen. Richard graduated at Bristol University with a BSc First Class Hons in Chemistry. He works for Proctor and Gamble as a Products Research Manager and though based in Surrey, he often travels to Russia, Japan, Hong Kong and the USA on company business. Helen is in the final year of her A levels and will be starting her course in Biology at university in October 1998.

*Eugene and  
Gwen with  
Helen and  
Richard  
(1994)*



## Cyril Andrew Desmier

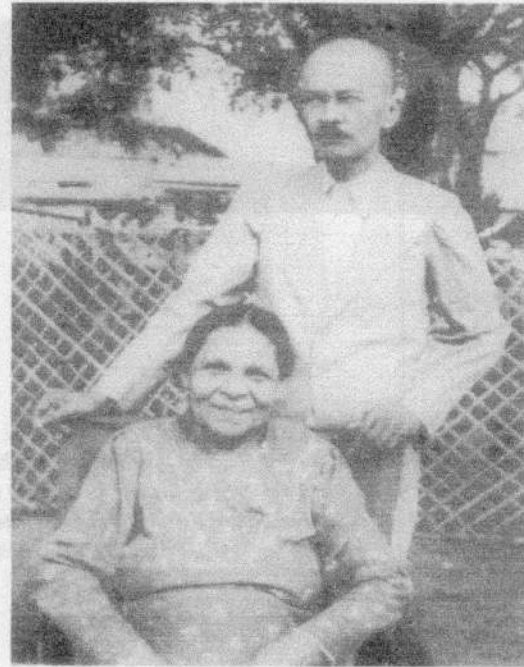
Cyril Andrew Desmier was the fifth child of Thomas Alfred and Mary Teresa Desmier.



Cyril was born on 1st July 1900 in Trichinopoly (now called Tiruchirappali), South India where he spent most of his childhood years. He studied at St. Joseph's High School as a day scholar and lived

with his parents four brothers and four sisters in Kempstown, a little village on the outskirts of Tiruchirappali.

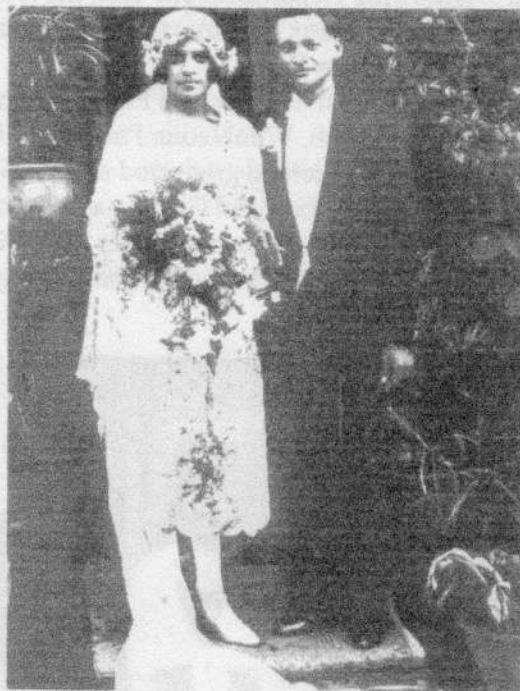
On leaving school, like most of his relatives and friends, and his elder brother Bertram, he joined the South Indian Railway, initially doing temporary work. On the 8th March 1918, he got a permanent appointment as a fireman at the Loco Shed, and thus started his long career with the Railways. Little did he know when he joined that day, that twenty nine years later he would return to this same Loco Shed as the Foreman in charge of it. From a fireman to an engine Driver, he progressed through the various grades initially driving goods trains, then passenger trains, and finally, every engine driver's dream, driving the crack Express Trains.



*Thomas Alfred and Mary Teresa Desmier, parents of Cyril Andrew Desmier. Photo taken in Madurai 1941*

At the age of 30, Cyril married a school teacher, Mary Teresa Fernandez on 14th May 1930 at St

Mary's Cathedral, Tiruchirappalli. (By a strange coincidence, Cyril's mother's maiden name was also Mary Teresa Fernandez). Mary Teresa was from a very religious and devout Roman Catholic Family. Her mother took a very active part in the Church, organising and raising much needed funds for charities. Her brother, Monsignor Joss Fernandez was the Superior General of the Indian Missionary Society and many of her cousins joined the Priesthood and other Religious orders such as the Franciscans and the Apostolic Carmelite Order. Mary Teresa was very talented and hard working. She played the guitar and piano, was very good at embroidery and dress-making, a skill inherited from



*Wedding photograph of Cyril Andrew Desmier and Mary Teresa Fernandez. Tiruchirappali 14 May 1930*

her father who owned a tailoring business in Tellicherry on the west coast of India. She was also a painter, painting with oil paints, and had a flair for making artificial flowers using crepe paper which she used to wax to enhance their appearance.

Although Cyril had no University qualifications, he was always eager to study, was well disciplined and hardworking. In spite of the long working hours he still found time to study through correspondence courses. He soon became a Loco Inspector. Though this was a career move, it was an upheaval for his family, as most of his postings were short term assignments to Villupuram, Madurai, Shoranur and Quilon Rather than disrupt his children's education, the elder children were sent to boarding school at Tiruchirappalli, while the younger ones stayed with relatives.

In 1947 Cyril returned to Tiruchirappalli as the Loco Foreman and engineer in charge of the Loco Shed. The Loco Shed was one of the Central service and maintenance depots in the South for both metre gauge and broad gauge steam locomotives. The Loco Shed was later expanded to maintain and service diesel trains. Cyril was also responsible for the introduction of the first diesel trains which ran between Tiruchirappalli and

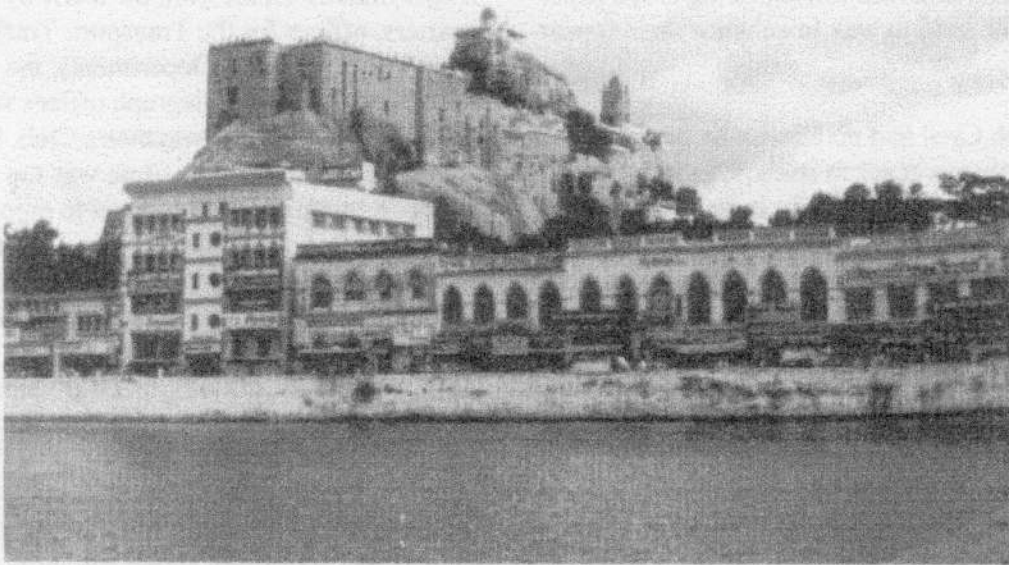
Karaikudi, and Tiruchirappalli and Lalgudi.

Tiruchirappalli had a very large population of Anglo-Indians. Apart from the Railway Headquarters, offices for the Transport, Traffic, Freight and Accounts Departments, the Customs, Police and Post and Telegraph offices were also located there. The Railwaymen's Club, better known as the Railway Institute was the place where its members used to meet to enjoy a game of snooker, tennis, badminton etc., or just relax and unwind after a day's work. It was also the venue for weddings, dances and Christmas functions. Cyril was the Honorary Secretary for the Railway Institute. He was also the Secretary for the Tiruchirappalli branch of the All India Anglo-Indian Association.

On 30th June 1945, Cyril retired from the Railways after a successful career spanning thirty seven years. Having had to vacate his railway quarters, he bought his own house and continued to live in Tiruchirappalli. In July 1960 he emigrated to the UK with his family to join his two sons Neville and Malcolm who came to the UK the previous year. He lived in Barnes for a year, and then settled into his own home in Wimbledon Park. He died in May 1965 and was buried in the Merton & Morden Cemetery, Surrey.



*A recent photograph of the modern railway station at Tiruchirappalli*



*The Rock Fort Temple, Tiruchirappali . In the foreground the Cauvery River*

### **NEWS CLIPS**

- ◆ Mike Desmier from Cincinnati, Ohio USA (a grandson of Bertram, southern clan) has sent me some photos. One is of several members of his family taken when they came from all corners of the world for a wedding. I will include this in the next newsletter
- ◆ Congratulations to John and Sue Desmier in Toronto, Canada, They have become grandparents for the first time. Their daughter Stacy and husband Roger have had their first child Tanner Edward Christian Grey. Tanner was born on 17 June 1997.
- ◆ I am now in contact with quite a few people who get this newsletter through email. If you would like electronic copies of any photos or text that I have, or better still can email me a contribution or photo to publish in the newsletter please let me know.

*This newsletter is edited by Rick Desmier. I intend to produce a new edition every six months or so, depending upon contributions. If you have any articles, news or comments for future copies please send them to me at:*

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*If you have a relative who did not receive a copy of this newsletter and you think that they would like their own copy please let me know.*