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Tracing a 100-yr-old tea legacy to Assam

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GUWAHATI, June 13: For octogenarian Rupert Jameson, a British gentleman, his long quest for his roots came to a happy conclusion at Apeejay's Borjuli Tea Estate near Tezpur.

Jameson (81), who made the Philippines his home for the last six years, had been searching for information on his Irish father Dr Ernest Tooke Jameson who stayed in Assam more than a hundred years ago.



It took Jameson several decades to painstakingly put together the pieces of history he unravelled in his quest for his legacy before he finally arrived at Tezpur last Saturday, accompanied by his wife Renata (77).

"It was after a lot of effort that I was able to trace back my father's life as a doctor at Borjuli tea garden in Tezpur in 1928. In the archives of Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin, I found that my father left two addresses – Kalacherra in Cachar and Borjuli. On Kalacherra I have been unable to find any trace and I suspect that his stay there was of short duration but Borjuli it was where he served for a considerable time," Jameson, a former Nestle employee, told *The Assam Tribune*.

(See page 7)

Tracing a 100-yr-old ...

(Contd from page 1)

"I was overjoyed at tracing back my family history at long last. Borjuli has also been overwhelming with its warm welcome to us. I had not expected it," Jameson, who lost his father in 1950 when he was only 13, said.

Jameson who had a flavour of Assam's famed tea ambience said that he would take very fond memories of Assam. "Borjuli Tea Estate and hospital team gave us a tour of the hospital where my father worked. Various surgical tools, bandage gauge carrying box of my father's era were all in glass cases, preserved, I suppose as souvenirs of the time when my father worked in the hospital," he said.

Nasfiqur Rehman, manager of Borjuli Tea Estate said that hosting the Jamesons was a proud and

touching moment for him and his colleagues.

"Assam Tea comes with an enduring legacy, glory and heritage. When Jameson found his father's workplace here, my entire team doffed our hats to his quest for his personal legacy. The late Dr Jameson's bungalow does not exist anymore which was sad because we do have many heritage bungalows on our various estates but the Jameson couple cherished the time spent at his father's workplace with our medical team," he said.

Jameson assumed that his father graduated in 1907 because his thesis, 'The Treatment of the Epileptic' dated 1907 was published in the Dublin Journal of Medical Science, Vol. CXXV in 1908 and soon after he got a job offer in India. In 1912, as the captain of a polo team his team won in Bishnauth the

trophy sponsored by Williamson Magor & Co.

"The silver cup is in my possession and was one of the biggest clues back to Assam. I have evidence that he left Assam only once for one year, during World War I, when he was sent as a medical officer, to Mesopotamia (now Iraq) where he had to operate on a barge on the river Euphrates where he had to amputate limbs without modern anaesthetics. This experience left him with white hair," he said.

After one year, Dr Jameson returned to his former job in Assam. "I have more family roots in tea which I have yet to research – one William Jameson who was in charge of the botanical gardens in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh in the 19th century and developed tea varieties suitable for growing in the Kangra valley and returned to Scotland in 1875," he said.