



# S. Thomas' College Gurutalawa

## Old Boys' Association

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**Newsletter No: 09/05**

**April 2005**  
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### **THE LAST CALL –BEFORE THE CURTAIN FALLS**

While every endeavour was made by the OBA in the past four years, within the confines and limitations of the Rules of the OBA to staunch the deterioration in standards and help in many ways, the financial crisis which has deepened, needs being addressed immediately.

Representations made directly and indirectly to the 'Powers that Are' administering the College were not given enough attention. But the good news is that efforts are being made to address these issues even now. The fact is the College is Rs.3.5 million in the red and there is a monthly shortfall of Rs.350,000.- .

The OBA commissioned a team of Professionals to give a comprehensive Report at a cost of Rs.54,000.- to revamp the Administration and the Financial Procedures, three years ago. This was referred to all concerned and the important recommendation to appoint an Administrative Officer was put into effect. But unfortunately, though the OBA agreed to pay half the salary, it turned out to be an exercise in futility. Possibly and 'maybe' interested parties did not allow him to function as he should because the Report was never considered seriously for proper implementation. Suffice to say that none of the recommendations of the Report have been put into effect by the Management.

In these circumstances, it is gratifying that a new Headmaster with a 'will to do' has been appointed along with an Acting Manager who has shown keenness and spends much time on matters connected with Guru. There is also good co-operation between them.

The present Headmaster having inherited these problems is yet looking ahead. He has already done much and we are confident he can do more. This augurs well for the future. **But we cannot & should not leave everything to him and we have to shoulder what burdens we can bear to make his task lighter & for him to spend more time on the day to day affairs to bring up the teaching standards and discipline.**

So it was in this backdrop that his Lordship the Bishop summoned a Meeting of all concerned about the future of Gurutalawa on the 29<sup>th</sup>. March 2005. After a lively exchange of views, a Committee was appointed and entrusted with the task of giving a quick plan of action to meet the immediate problem and a long term plan for the future. It would appear that at last, everyone has woken up to the reality.

So the College needs Rs.4 million to come to grips with the immediate problems. The Board has already released Rs.1 million to meet the most urgent of commitments.

In the long term we must upgrade the infrastructure, add-on IT & English, and get better Tutors to attract more students and the Committee appointed, will forward their proposals by next month.

How can the our OBA help? STC Bandarawela is fortunate to have strong backers and benefactors. One ex-patriate Old Boy, has given Rs.5 million to start building a Swimming Pool on a 'repay when you can' basis, while another has given an outright gift of Rs.6 million to have a fine modern fully equipped Library. **Our beloved Guru must surely have such benefactors amongst our Old Boys who value what they got from the College.** Or would they like to take up directly handling any Project from a list being prepared now to improve the infrastructure and other areas that need remedies. Just write in.

To our membership of over 700, we make this last appeal to save our beloved Guru – give any amount over Rs.5000.- each, once and for all – **it's a lifetime thing.** Surely you can afford this much. We may not have an Alma Mater if you fail us.

**But more importantly,** it is also proposed to issue two-year redeemable debentures at around 11.1% p.a. interest in slots of Rs.100,000/- each, so that Old Boys who have a Love for the School can purchase these and they themselves will benefit with a yearly interest payment under the auspices of the Board of

Governors. Hope many of you can divert funds from savings or from lesser yielding deposits and take up more than one slot. It helps you – it helps the College.

**A joint Mt.Lavinia~Gurutalawa Thomian Fair** has also been mooted for August/September to underwrite the debenture issue and use the excess funds to improve the College.

We hope Guru Thomians will respond to what may be your last opportunity to save the College. We would like to have your views to this end.

**But it is our duty to do what we have to do till the curtain falls. That is the way we were made to think by the Founders. For their sake, let us bear the yoke. Look at the sun & you will leave the haunting shadows behind.**

Esto perpetua.

Ed.

## NEWS

The **AGM & Re-Union** was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> February at Gurutalawa as usual and the attendance was satisfactory compared to the years past. But it would have been more gratifying had more members made an appearance.

The Games were worked off well and it is to the credit of the Headmaster and staff that there was more organization in working off the events and especially the cricket started on time with wickets and bails. Last year it was with makeshift wickets! There was a delay in working off the swimming events only. There were 115 members for Lunch on Saturday. **See the pictures on our website.**

We reverted to the earlier practice of having the AGM on Saturday evening and there was good attendance. The fellowship hour was again full of ‘spirits’. The OBA Dinner followed and while some members left in the night itself, others stayed over for the Chapel Service on Sunday.

The following **Executive Committee** was appointed at the AGM, with the Headmaster (Ex-Officio) President of the OBA in the Chair.

Senior Vice President : Bandula Wanigasekera

Vice Presidents : N.D.U. Kuru Uthumpala - K.Bandusena - Athula Kumaranayake

Secretary : Shervon Fernando Asst. Secretary: Ajith Jayatilaka

Treasurer : Brig. B. Munasinghe Asst. Treasurer: Gamini Fernando

Committee	: P.S.Duleep Kumar	Sunil Watawala	S.Raj Mohan
	Hermon Fernando	Nihal Wanniarachchi	Sumedha Perera
	Chandana De Silva	Lasantha Perera	A.A.R. Mawahib
	Suresh Thiyagarajah	Rizvy Jalil	P.S.R.Fernando
	Thusitha Nanayakkara	Rasika Fernando	Leo Sebastian

### THE OBA – It’s Role, Functions and Limitations

To understand the present, we have to delve into the past – even to the very beginning of the formation of an OBA at S. Thomas’ College, Mt. Lavinia.

The idea of the formation of an OBA had germinated in the mind of Warden Miller and his letter of the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1886 (119 years ago) was the beginning of the chain of events that led to the formation of the OBA at Mt. Lavinia in that year. **(Quote):**

“ For some years, I have been possessed of a desire, which has lately become very strong, to see some sort of Society or Guild formed of Old Boys of S. Thomas’ College. The idea is not an original one as it has been developed most successfully in England, primarily with a view to the strengthening of the ties which should bind a man to the place where, it is hoped, he has learned some of the most valuable lessons of life.

Such a society in connection with S. Thomas’ College would, I think, promote this desirable result, but it would have a further beneficial effect. It would be a means of giving lads who find work in Colombo, a sort of rallying point. They would be less liable to get lost sight of, as it is the case frequently at present”..... (Unquote).

But with the passage of time, inevitable changes had to take place and the OBA was called upon to take a more pro-active role.

**Then it became the lot of Dr. Hayman to address us in 1959, and his full inaugural address is reproduced in our website : [www.stcguru.com](http://www.stcguru.com) – Please keep in touch with us through the site.**

But let me reproduce some important excerpts from the Inaugural Speech, 46 years ago :

“ Our business today is to establish an Old Boys’ Association for the past members of the staff and boys of the school. One object in doing so is to help Old Boys to keep in touch with one another and with the School.....

**The other main object of the association is to rally round the School, all old members who wish to uphold and help it by every means in their power.....**

**If you can help us, even if only in a small way, you will be doing something to hand on to others, the sort of education that you yourselves enjoyed and to see that your successors in the school are better provided than you were.”**

Let us not let him down at this stage when we are called upon to LIVE his exhortation. The School needs help. Yes, your help. That is what **Dr. Hayman wanted - we quote: “Help it by every means in (their) your power.”**

**Serves no purpose now to ask how the decline happened – we all know it – but let us do what we have to do now – and ensure that it will not happen again. The OBA must see to it.**

**What use singing “Rally round the College flag” till we are Black & Blue if we do not LIVE the College Song.**

Our Rules have circumscribed the role we can play. A copy of the Rules was sent to everyone. You can see it on our website too. It is not for us to function as a ‘Board of Management’ as some would believe. Ours is an Advisory Role, and to help the School by assisting the Headmaster and addressing his concerns. **This is what we are committed to do.**

**Join with us – rally round the College Flag.**

Bandu Wanigasekera  
5 April 2005