



S. Thomas' College Gurutalawa

OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION - NEWSLETTER

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COMMENT - Change:

Mr Geethal Mendis has retired prematurely as Head Master of Gurutalawa effective from 31.8.2004. His personality was suffused by his kindness - a soft virtue - which was unfortunately lost in the maelstrom of the state of affairs at Gurutalawa and which he inherited. On the other hand the accommodation he afforded the OBA Ex-Co in its attempt to assist him in his difficulties, was enlightened and extraordinary. He gave it licence to do whatever was possible short of impinging on his own authority as Head Master and which enabled the OBA to play a proactive role in certain areas of management. This we note with appreciation and trust that successive Heads will accommodate and encourage this qualitatively enhanced role for the OBA. The annual Prize Giving was held on August 6 and we are gratified to reproduce a part of Mr. Mendis' comments on the OBA activities.

Quote: -- "I am also grateful to the Old Boys of the College, officials of the OBA for their unstinted cooperation extended to me at the College during the year under review and as had been the practice always, contributing so lavishly particularly to improve the lot of the College farm and for the magnificent response received every time a clarion call was made for assistance in the name of the Alma Mater. In this regard permit me to mention the names of Mr Asanga Seneviratne for his donation for purchase of sports equipment, Mr U.D. Jayawardena for his donation, Mr Lal Edirisinghe and Mr Mahinda Padmasiri for the donations made to purchase much needed expensive trumpets for the College Band.

It is also pertinent to mention that the OBA had a very close rapport with the College throughout the year. Apart from the OBA celebrations held at the College premises the Executive Committee also held three meetings at Gurutalawa. The OBA was very particular about discipline in the College, standard of English, sports and extra curricular activities. It is very encouraging to see them extending a helping hand to the Head Master in numerous ways.

The most noble project the OBA undertook during the course of the year was the Museum dedicated to Dr Hayman's memory, consisting of various items personally used by Dr Hayman during his tenure as the Headmaster, very much of historical and sentimental value too. This museum will provide useful information to younger generations at Gurutalawa and those would be Thomians in years to come.

The OBA was instrumental in bringing out the College Magazine once again after a lapse of so many years, which was indeed a very commendable effort. Another fine gesture was the donation of sports gear by the old boys." -- Unquote

Mr E.G.J. Canagasabey, presently Head of the Department of Physical Education, Eastern University, is succeeding Mr Mendis. He is a graduate in Agriculture, holds Diplomas in both Education and Management. He is a former Silver Medalist of the Javelin Throw in the National Championships. Born in 1961, he is fluent in all three languages and will take up duties in October 2004. We assure him of our unstinted support. His all-round credentials will help him in his onerous tasks ahead.

We also wish Mr Geethal Mendis the very best in his future undertakings.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

Regular Meetings have been held including the practice of every third one at Gurutalawa. These were well attended and lively discussions resulted in much headway on many areas of concern to the OBA.

The practice of meeting at Gurutalawa, though of much strain to the members, was considered very useful as members could acquaint themselves of the current situations in the College first hand, while the College point of view was that it gave a fillip to the morale of the Staff, who appreciated the genuine concern of the OBA and that it was firmly dedicated to serve the interests of the College.

During the period since the last newsletter, important activities and events briefly are:

1. The realisation of a long cherished hope to set up the **Hayman-Foster Museum** and its eventual seeing the light of day by the dedicated endeavour of a large number of Old Boys who contributed

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material and also the help of Mr.G.C.Mendis and Staff, to locate the numerous items stored in the College. It was declared open officially the day before the last AGM in February 2004 by a distinguished old boy of the Hayman-Foster era and one of the pioneers at Gurutalawa in the early forties, Mr.S.K.Wickremasinghe. We hope the visitors to Gurutalawa will make it a point of viewing the contents and if anyone has any material to add, they will pass them on to the Secretary of the OBA. You can view part of the contents in the College website: www.stcguru.com as all material therein cannot be placed on the site. We can provide a full list of items **on application** by you.

2. The OBA undertaking the task of sponsoring the Issue for 2002/2003 did the revival of the issue of a College Magazine. It is sad that this is the first issue after a lapse of 19 years, the intervening period devoid of recorded facts of College activities. The Magazine is the repertory of current events of the College and the recording of these, eventually, is its history. It is replete with color photographs and we hope members will write in to purchase **copies priced at Rs.200.- each**.
3. The **Website** www.stcguru.com started in September 2003 was regularly updated to keep the members abreast of news and activities. This year it has been sponsored by Ranjit Wanigasekera, 5, Heritage Ave., Hamilton, New Zealand, an Old Boy of the very early 1950's vintage. Our grateful thanks to him. Also special thanks also to Muditha Dissanayake for the maintaining of the site and taking the time for regular updates in spite of the burdens of his Academic studies and the work in his Industrial Placement at Staffordshire University, U.K.

FELLOWSHIP DINNER:

This annual event has now been **fixed for Thursday, 25th November '04 at the Mount Lavinia Hotel, the tickets being priced at Rs.1500.- each**. The occasion is also to welcome the new Headmaster and President of the OBA. We are aware that this is a Thursday but Friday being a Poya Holiday, members will be free next day to sleep it off and even travel late morning, if they are going out for the long weekend. **That little effort on your part to attend this function, is justified by a well spent evening with old friends.**

THE FARM:

The Farm Managers contract of employment expired in July but it was extended till end December this year. The OBA subscribes Rs.6000.- monthly towards his salary and a further Rs.3000.- per month as special allowance. Earlier the Farm was a total white elephant but now it is making a nominal profit. Further improvements are necessary to the sheds and some other amenities in order to maximise the utilisation of the available resources, but financial constraints hold us back. **If members can make some special contributions in this regard, we would be most grateful.**

The Headmaster said that the area of the land leased out to minor employees will be taken back and given to the Farm in which case we can grow vegetables and fruit trees too as in days past. Goat Farming is a good prospect, but again financial constraints to expand are there, unless Old Boys help.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:

The position of an A.O. was mooted in the report commissioned by the OBA to ameliorate the conditions at Gurutalawa and Mr.Walter Manampery, retired Sri Lanka Army, was appointed last year. His contract ended last June & it was extended till December this year. The OBA pays Rs.7500.- monthly as half his salary contribution with the College paying half. He has rendered valuable service to an extent determined by the reduced support he received to implement the set of recommendations in the earlier mentioned report.

WATER SUPPLY & DISTRIBUTION:

In the previous years the OBA did much in this regard in their concern for infrastructure maintenance & its improvement. A new Tube Well was drilled near the Keble Dormitory entirely by the support received from Mr.Lakshman Seneviratne, former Deputy Minister & an Old Boy of Gurutalawa, through the Water Resources Board. This well is underutilised as the supply and construction of the pipelines to the header tank is not complete due lack of funds. **This is another area where interested Old Boys can contribute.**

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SWIMMING POOL:

As you all know, this is the centrepiece of the College and the OBA did much in restoring the old glory of the pool nearly two years ago but proper treatment of the water is not done regularly for lack of funds for purchase of chemicals. Also dearth of water during the dry season and some seepage due cracks on the sides, add to the problems to maintain the Swimming Pool to the perfection desired. This is an area that deserves much attention and financial inputs from Old Boys.

THE PRIZE GIVING:

This was held on the 6th August 2004 with Mr. U.D.Jayawardena, the CEO of Lanka Transformers Ltd., and an Old Boy of the College in the late '60s. He was greeted on arrival by the School Band, and College Dance Troupe, which had excelled in All-Island Competitions by winning at the top, performed to welcome him.

The Headmaster in his speech amongst other things, acknowledged the very valuable support of the OBA and the Teachers over the year. He made very special mention of Father Nihal Fernando for his sincere dedication & service as he left to take up other functions of the Church in Baddegama. The Headmaster welcomed Fr. H.Goodchild who had served as Chaplain till about 15 years ago. He also thanked two volunteers, Mrs.N.Farouk who helped out in English by having classes on Saturdays and Mr.Kamalakannan who helped out in Swimming mainly but guided other sports too. Mr.Mahen Ranasinghe, Secretary, OBA., delivered the Vote of Thanks to the Chief Guest, a customary duty of the OBA.

BIO GAS PLANT:

Commissioning of this has been delayed by the lack of straw due to drought conditions but it commenced in mid-September in a trial phase. After initial commencement with straw, it is to be extended to the use of waste from the kitchen as an input as well. When in full production, some gas will be supplied to the kitchen to offset the high cost by use of firewood.

IT UNIT:

This is long felt need and one that every School is aspiring to possess. Discussions are underway with Gateway Intl. To run the IT section. **If members here or overseas can donate small computers, even used computers or even peripherals, they would be doing a great service to the College and future students.**

THOMIAN QUADRANGULAR SPORTS CARNIVAL:

This is being organised for the Bishops Challenge Trophy and will be held at Mt.Lavinia from October 15th to 17th. There will be a welcome for participants on the 15th. October afternoon and the Badminton Games will kick off and the other events on Saturday. All four Schools will enter competitors for the various events in only Athletics, Soccer, Basketball and Badminton which sports are available in all four Schools. After events on Saturday 16th., individual Medals & Trophies will be awarded and a campfire will precede an informal Fellowship Dinner. On Sunday a Communion Service will be at the Chapel followed by breakfast. **This innovative event is being held to foster Sports Activities, in the best traditions of Thomian Sportsmanship, and enhance the fraternal relations of the four Schools.** It is expected to be an annual fixture and is being organised by the Joint Committee of the OBA's of all four Schools.

Old Boys of all STC Schools, parents & wellwishers are all invited to attend & participate.

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS:

As you know, the OBA revived the award of the Dr.Hayman Scholarship and the Canon Foster Scholarship last year and had been in abeyance for over six years, as the simple matter of criteria had been undecided while the money was used for current account expenditure. Specific criteria were laid down by the OBA & passed on to the Headmaster for application & awards were made last year.

This was continued this year as well and the recipients are:

Dr.Hayman Scholarship: N.N.Lanka - for all round performance at GCE (O) - 2003

Canon Foster Scholarship: S.De Saram - for Divinity.

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Further, this year, two more Scholarships were awarded as :

A.K.Chapman Scholarship for Science: Sinhala Medium: M.I.M.Shifan

A.K.Chapman Scholarship for Science: Tamil Medium: R.Basker

As we indicated in the website, Mrs. Betty Chapman, wife of the Late A.K.Chapman revered Science Master and at times Acting Headmaster and their son, Anthony Chapman, now resident in Australia set up a Scholarship Fund of Rs.329,000.- (Aus.\$5000.-) end last year under the aegis of the OBA as trustees.

This money is separately invested, as are the other two Scholarship Funds, in the National Savings Bank in order that they are not used for current account transactions.

THE CHAPEL : AN APPEAL BY FR. GOODCHILD: (After editing for space constraints)

“ I have returned to College after 13 years of hibernation and find that many things have to be done to get back to the old way. We must see that the Chapel goes on, whatever happens. You will all look back and have joyful memories of those great days of the past when worship at the Chapel was a day to look forward to. Fr. Foster maintained a lively concern and interest in all aspects of chapel life, with daily worship, Sunday worship, confirmation services, Chapel Festival Services, Carol Services, Choir Guild Teas & Outings, Servers Guild activities etc.. We continue with Daily Prayers, Sunday worship, Carol Services, Chapel Festival Services faithfully. We have servers and a Choir that does not vest.

The things we need badly and attention desired to:

Chapel windows - woodwork has perished - needs repair & painting.

New Altar Frontals - now all worn out after 50 years on - best if they are in four colours.

Three servers cassocks with surplices and A Cruet Set for Wine & Water.

A set of white vestments - Fr. Fosters was placed in the Museum !! and a Background Curtain for the altar.

Chapel piano is out of tune - possibly nothing done for over 15 years. Needs some repair as well.

REGULAR BENEFACTORS:

We are extremely grateful to the following Members for their **annual regular payments by Bankers Order**, as follows: Mr.S.K.Wickremasinghe of Rs.6000.- Mr.J.O.Yatawara of Rs.4200.- Mr.Falil Caffoor of Rs.3600.- and Mr.L.J.S.Goonawardena of Rs.400.- .

We hope other loyal Old Boys will place a Bank Standing Order of a small regular payment of even Rs.1000.- an year or Rs.250.- a quarter, which will help us enormously. Sure you can afford something - not much !! It is for a good and worthy cause.

OTHER NEEDS:

The **School Band** has no proper instruments - they borrow them from the Muslim School in the neighborhood for important occasions !! Instruments are required. Having won the All Island Competition, the **Dance Troupe** is invited for various Provincial and National events - most recently to play at the Provincial Council at Reception to the Secretary, Education Ministry. But the drums are in such poor condition that the best performance cannot be rendered. **Both these need your financial help to meet these needs.**

NEW MEMBERS:

Welcomed since AGM in February 2004.

Rasika Dassanayake, J.P.Meegoda, Asiri Galhena Perera, Lakshitha Perera, Thusitha Nanayakkara, Senaka Hordagoda, Tuan Suresh Halaldeen, Palaniyandy Kulasekeran, Nihal Perera and Ranjit Wanigasekera.

OBITUARIES:

We place on record our sympathies.

Dambawinna W. (1943-47) **Ellawala Alexis** (1955-60) **Kasturiarachchi D.P.P.** (1986-95)

Marasinghe John W. (1948-90) **Dabare Nissanka G.** (1958-62) **Perera N. Asoka** (circa 1950-52)

Suriyaaratchi Mahinda P. (1958-62) **Wimalasekera Sam** (circa 1945-46)

Cader Shoaib A. (1942-46) **Selvaratnam Rev.A.J.,** Former Warden STC Mt.Lavinia (1965-69)

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