

Royal – Thomian nexus in retrospect

The College of Saint Thomas the Apostle, was founded at Mutwal by **Dr James Chapman**, the first Anglican Bishop of Colombo on 3rd February 1851 in Mutwal. He himself was a product of Eton College and King's College Cambridge. The College motto *Esto Perpetua* and the College colours Blue, Black and Blue are Etonian legends and the naming of forms and classes at STC were set to be based on the prestigious English Public School pattern. Royal College was modeled to British standards too.

After having been at Mutwal for 66 years, the 1st term of 1918 saw S.Thomas' settling down in Mt Lavinia. In 1924 the legendary Big Club (cricket) Grounds was declared open by Warden McPherson as a Memorial to those who sacrificed their lives in the First World War. The Small Club junior ground were laid in 1928. The Academy and Royal College shares such beginnings by pioneers.

In 1932 a former Thomian cricketer **Canon R S De Saram** the Sub Warden was elevated as the Warden in Mt Lavinia, at a relatively young age, having had a distinguished record at Keble and Cuddestone, Oxford. He is remembered for the high level of sportsmanship and discipline that he strictly maintained, apart from all the development at STC Mt Lavinia in many fields. Royal College speaks of many legends as well.

The 2nd World War disrupted life at STC Mt Lavinia and the school had to vacate the premises on 9th April 1942, to make way for the 35th British General Hospital for Armed Services in the College premises. The Big Match nevertheless continued without interruption and remains the second oldest cricket fixture in the world, after a school game in Australia. The Royal – Thomian is a bigger worldwide social event than the one in Australia.

STC at Gurutalawa was born on 12th May 1942 with the revered Sub Warden **Dr R L Hayman** seconded as the Headmaster. STC Mount Lavinia was relocated and flourished in Gurutalawa during the World War Two. This brings us into an important historical fact.

In spite of the friendly rivalry, Royal and STC have often contributed to each others growth. In April 1916, Royalist Edmund de Livera wrote the five versus of our present Thomian College Song, that was set to the music by Warden Stone. The Gurutalawa Estate was donated by Mr Leslie De Saram a Royalist to build STC at Gurutalawa. The Thomian fraternity is grateful to Mr Leslie De Saram (*a relative of Warden Canon R S De Saram*) and Mr Edmund de Livera.

In 1946 all but two players in the Thomian team were from STC at Guru and the post war Thomian cricket captains 1947, 48 and 49 hailed from Gurutalawa. In 1943 the last wicket partnership for the Royal Thomian was broken with a Gurutalawa connection and in 1945 a Gurutalawa bowler trained by the coach Rev A J Foster (later Headmaster), took a hat trick in the encounter. The unique Obstacle Course initiated by Dr Rolo Hayman made tough Thomians on a tougher terrain. The history of Royal College records many great strides as well.

There is no Royal without S.Thomas' and no S.Thomas' without Royal ~ two great schools indeed.

Esto Perpetua ~ Disce aut Discede

Milinda Hettiarachchi
S. Thomas' College