

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Introduction

The new Ex-Co was elected with the new Headmaster Mr. Gladwyn Canagasabey in the chair on 26th February 2005 and he was welcomed by all the Old Boys.

The main aim was to push through the upliftment of the School and to maintain the continued effort of the past few years, and the new Committee engaged in this exercise from the outset. Initially, a very close relationship was built up by the OBA with the new Manager of the School, Mr.Christo Gonawela and the new Headmaster so that acting in concert, all parties will direct their efforts in a co-ordinated manner in furthering the objectives. We feel we have achieved this.

Already, the Board of Governors had been made alive to the situation at the College, and they had now to be made aware of the urgency for very early action.

It was then that the Chairman of the Board, His Lordship, Bishop Duleep de Chickera, summoned all interested Old Boys and well wishers from even Mt. Lavinia and their OBA to an Open Forum Meeting with the Board, to see what needs be done immediately to arrest a deteriorating situation at Gurutalawa. The Meeting was well attended but little headway was made in arriving at any direct course of action initially, but the suggestion of our past Senior Vice President, Mr.P.S.Duleep Kumar that a Thomian Fair held jointly with Mt. Lavinia & Gurutalawa appeared to be the most appropriate. Also he proposed that a Debenture Issue underwritten by the Board for Rs.3.5 million, be placed before the Old Boys to subscribe to it, so as to raise the immediate funds to defray the high overdraft in the College Bank account. This was also accepted to be pursued and Mr.Duleep Kumar said that he will arrange for Janashakthi Financial Services to handle the matter with no cost for the service.

At several subsequent Meetings with the Chairman & other members of the Board held at S.Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia, these two suggestions were fully endorsed and a Thomian Fair Committee was appointed with Mr. B.R.L.Fernando, a distinguished Old Boy of Mt. Lavinia and Chairman, CIC Group of Companies, as Chairman while the matter of the Debenture Issue was left in the safe hands of Mr.Duleep Kumar. The Warden, Dr.David Ponniah graciously agreed to make available the College Grounds and all other facilities there. The Headmaster of Bandarawela, Mr.L.Chandrasekera indicated he will give his full support in making this Fair a success and participate in it.

A special mention is made of the Sub Warden Mr. Harshana Perera, who chaired some of the Fair Committee meetings in the absence of the Chairman and the Warden. Further he did yeoman service in the last few days leading to the Fair and we thank him.

More on the Fair later.

RE-Union Celebrations – 2005

The usual Cricket Match was the main feature of the Saturday morning and also as usual the Old Boys had a festive approach to it. They had their fun while the match was on with Mr. Jayatunga of the College Staff acted as a seasoned commentator and delivered a running commentary. Mr.Athula Kumanayake had organized a Papara Band which kept

the music at the required tempo to add to the fun. A departure from the year before was an initiative of the Headmaster to have soft ball cricket match alongside and this found many spectators dividing their attention between the two games. The Grounds were full and the Headmaster himself played in the softball game.

The other games, Basket Ball & Volleyball were also worked off, while in the Swimming, there was a delay but when it got going, it provided much fun and entertainment as usual.

Hayman-Foster Museum.

Some improvements were made over the year and there were many visitors to the Museum in the course of the year. It continues to attract visitors – a visit is a must to those who have not been inside.

The Farm

Mr.K.Wimalarajah continued to be in charge of the Farm and the production met all the requirements of the College and the excess was sold outside. The OBA gave the financial assistance to improve some areas of the Farm Buildings & their roofs as well as continuing to meet the allowances of the Farm Manager. However, it was decided to stop his allowance as from end December '05 due to financial constraints. The present status is that there are about 700 broilers and 600 layers. The introduction of Goats and Cattle was successful and the College now has four Goats while the ten Cows now provide sufficient milk to the College and the excess is sold. The saving in not purchasing powdered milk is substantial, while giving fresh milk to students is beneficial healthwise. Some sundry income from the thirty five Ducks is derived by the sale of their eggs and so far about 15 ducks have been sold to add to the kitty.

The OBA has given temporary financial accommodation this year to the extent of Rs.80,000.- while Mr.Chandana De Silva and his friends contributed to the purchase of goats. Other Old Boys contributed directly to the School to purchase the cattle. We are grateful to them all. The OBA is gradually divesting itself of the responsibility to the Farm as it has reached a reasonable level of stability.

Foreign Voluntary Teachers

While the OBA pioneered this idea and put it in practice, there were some difficulties in replacements and with the inspirational help from his Lordship, the Bishop, there are two Volunteers at present, one Canadian Ms. Shirley Newell and the other British, Mr. Tom Wilkinson. Expanding on this idea is difficult for want of accommodation, as reasonably good living quarters are required. The OBA refurbished an earlier building and gave a start, and this still houses these Volunteers. **This is an area where any Old Boy can help in improving the buildings that can be refurbished to a better standard by making available the requisite funding.**

Our website : www.stcguru.com.

Mr.Muditha Dissanayake continued to maintain and update the site started in about September 2003, in spite of his commitments in the UK in studies and employment, and **the OBA expresses its grateful thanks to him.** In fact he is working now on a new improved version which will be available in a month or two. The necessary funds for the annual fee of Rs.17,500.- was paid by an Old Boy who wishes to remain anonymous.

Records of visitors to the site were kept from 6th May 2004 (though we started the site earlier), and since then, the visitors to date were : Total – 4257 including reloads. But the number of unique visitors were 3290, made up of :- Sri Lanka : 1291 UK : 566

Canada : 385 USA : 307 Sweden : 261 Australia : 221 UAE : 72 Kuwait : 28 NZ : 18 India : 16 Austria : 13 HK : 11 Others : 101 (who could not be unidentified).

Newsletters

Much emphasis was not given to this as the cost of printing, postage and the physical efforts in dispatch of over 700 newsletters proved a wastage of resources of the OBA and the personnel. Pathetic was the response requesting members for their financial support for the College. In fact only three persons volunteered to get advertisements for the Thomian Fair Souvenir – Mr.Nanda Rambukpotha, Mr.Ana Medonza and Mr.Majintha Perera , on our request for members to get us advertisements or banners. All the others were collected by the Ex-Co members.

However, two issues, Newsletters Nos. 09/05 and 10/05 were sent out to members.

IT Unit

Thanks to a gift of thirty computers and related hardware from **Mr.Dulip de Silva, an Old Boy now residing in Sweden, we were able to set up a well equipped IT Centre.** Having perused our website, he contacted the Senior VP by telephone in April 2005 with the offer and which was very much appreciated and accepted. There have been many cases of offers of various kinds in the past from thirty scholarships to several computers – but they never materialized. But Dulip's offer was translated to reality in record time, when in June he asked us to take delivery of these from his sister, Ms. Dheema de Silva. We had only to pay the transport to Guru, he having paid all the costs for shipment from Europe including Duties,Taxes & Clearing Charges from the Port. The transport cost Rs. 6110.- We cannot herein express our thanks and gratitude to them sufficiently, Ms. De Silva having handled all matters here in Sri Lanka and even waiting till 5pm at her office on a non-working day till everything was collected by us from her office.

The OBA had also gifted three computers earlier purchased locally and therefore, the IT Unit became a reality by the third quarter of 2005. It was formally declared open on the 30th July 2005, by Fr. Goodchild, the Chaplain, on a request made by Mr.Dulip de Silva, the Donor.

Now the College has four computers for exclusive use of year 1 to year 5 students with programmes to suit this age group. Three more are being formatted for them and will be available by end month. A new IT instructor Mr. Kaviharan, an Old Boy, has also been recruited for this section.

For year 6 to year 9 students, there are 15 computers and this group is instructed by Mr.Pushpakumara who also teaches Maths. **Another achievement by the OBA for which we can justly be proud but we must not forget the great efforts of the Headmaster who had to get everything in place in secure surroundings and plan out the IT teaching strategy.**

Staff Salary Subsidies – Administrative Officer

As mentioned earlier, the OBA bore the payment of allowances to the Farm Manager, but the financial burden on the payments to the Administrative Officer was relieved as he resigned in April 2005. We would very much like to get this position refilled soon, **but financial constraints are in the way.** However some discussions are under way for a more suitable person and **in fact an offer of Aus.\$150 per month guaranteed for one year, has been received from an Old Boy in Australia. If we can get a matching offer from any Old Boy (or a Group of Old Boys) for US\$.100 per month for a year (or**

about Rs.10,000.- per month), another great need for the College would have been filled by the OBA. Let us hope someone will rise to the occasion.

Generosity of the OBA Melbourne Branch

The established link with the OBA Melbourne Australia Branch was further strengthened by the promised gift from that Branch to our OBA, bearing fruit and in mid May 2005, we received Rs.124,532.61 exclusively for the improvements and maintenance of the Swimming Pool. Members will see that now the pool area is cordoned off by plastic coated netting and students do not cut across this area. We are grateful for the OBA Branch of Melbourne and herewith convey our thanks. The personal trouble taken to make this a reality by Mr. Peter Weerakoon, Mr.Spencer Herft & Mr. Edouard Rowlands, all Gurutalawa Old Boys, is sincerely acknowledged.

Project Support by OBA

A sum of Rs.60,000.- was given by the OBA to rehabilitate the Keble Dormitory, while the gift of three computers in March was at a cost of Rs.29,025.- For the rehabilitation of toilets in the Junior dormitory, Keble dormitory and the Foster Hall, an amount of Rs.73,490.- was donated, while the new lights in the Prep Hall to improve lighting, cost Rs.9,600.-.

For painting and repair of various roofs, including material, the OBA donated Rs.44,862.40, while for the computer room, a ceiling fan and a CD for teaching English cost the OBA Rs.4,499.-. We record with gratitude the donation of another fan valued at Rs.2,500.- by Mr. A. Mawahib.

Mr.Chandana De Silva and his friends contributed Rs.9000.- for the purchase of goats.

Tsunami Aid

A sum of Rs.10,000.- was given as Tsunami Aid to a member of the College Staff who had suffered damage to his house in an affected area. This donation was made through the College on a request and appeal by the Headmaster.

Collection of Arrears

Out of the outstanding amount of Rs,34,500.- for collection on Fellowship Dinner 2004, Rs.27,000.- was collected while the outstanding is only Rs.7,500.- now. This is very creditable when in earlier instances of dinners etc., the outstandings were much higher.

Issue of Debentures

It was indeed fantastic that the debenture issue of Rs. 3.5 million was subscribed to entirely by one Old Boy who took up the entire issue as a gesture to help Gurutalawa. Thus in the space of just six weeks by July end, the money was paid to Gurutalawa to wipe off the overdraft. However the liability of repayment in two years remain and the Old Boys must be mindful that the gracious gesture of one Old Boy, who wishes to remain anonymous, must not remain his anxiety alone, of not getting repaid. We hope Old Boys will contribute to the OBA, which will open a special Fund to meet the contingency of repayment in July 2007.

Thomian Fair 2005 – Joint Fair with STC., Mt.Lavinia.

As mentioned earlier, the Fair as proposed, took off with Sub-Committees being appointed at the first meeting held on 26th. May 2005, it was decided that the most suitable dates were 8th. 9th. and 10th. September and the Warden agreed to make available the College premises on these days. It was also decided that the Mt. Lavinia Old Boys Association and Staff members with prior experience in conducting Thomian Fairs, will man the important operational sub-committees.

SOUVENIR Sub-Committee:

Accordingly, the Gurutalawa OBA was only tasked with the responsibility for the Souvenir, and a sub-committee and was appointed, headed by Mr.Christo Gonawela, with a target to raise Rs.1,000,000.-. Mr.P.S.Duleep Kumar, Mr.Bandu Wanigasekera, Mr.Nihal Wanniarachchi, Mr.Gamini Fernando, Mr. Chandana De Silva and Mr.Ananda Medonza were others in the sub-committee. Mr. Raj Mohan of our Ex-Co, having served in earlier Fairs, was given the important Stalls sub-committee and it is no boast that he performed extremely well and his efforts were commended by all.

A request was made by newsletter to our members to give their help and a few rose to the occasion, but was far below expectations. The burden therefore fell on the few that were determined to make a success of the task assigned. Mr. Christo Gonawela was instrumental in getting Rs. 705,000.- worth of advertisements, while Mr.Duleep Kumar collected Rs.450,000.-

Mr.Ajith Jayatilaka collected Rs.100,000.- Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera collected Rs.81,000.- Mr.Upali Panditharatne collected Rs.75,000.- Mr.Athula Kumanayake collected Rs.55,000.- Mr.Chandana De Silva collected Rs. 52,500.- Mr.K.Bandusena collected Rs.30,000.- Mr.Hermon Fernando collected Rs.30,000.- Mr.Kuru Utumpala collected Rs. 22,000.- Mr.Ananda Medonza & Mr.Gamini Fernando Rs.20,000.- each, and a couple of others chipped in with an advertisement or two. Having collected over Rs.1,700,000.- and the cost of printing being limited to Rs.155,000.- , a clear profit of over Rs.1,550,000.- was realized. Considering that the target was set at Rs.1,000,000.- , the great success of a 50% over target, was entirely due to the Herculean task performed by Mr.Christo Gonawela and Mr. Duleep Kumar, who between them collected the bulk of the adverts.

Gurutalawa Main Stall at the Fair

At the Fair itself, Gurutalawa was perforce required to run a stall in order to show the appreciation of the efforts by all concerned to help Gurutalawa, even if the bulk of Old Boys of Gurutalawa were not inclined to help. The main stall was in two sections, one selling vegetables and the other selling jams, cordials and other bottled foodstuff and some rose plants and other flower plants. The stall was very nicely bedecked with streamers and an impressive name board, and Mr.Gamini Fernando provided the name board and banner and Mr. Nihal Wanniarachchi assisted in the arrangements & decor, along with Mr.Athula Kumanayake who provided the jets and electrics. We thank Agrisquad for assisting in the layout presentation and giving top quality vegetables and Mr.Hermon Fernando who co-ordinated the affairs of the Vege Stall. A nominal profit was generated but the motive for the running of the stall was not profit oriented and in anyway it achieved the purpose of a very colourful presence for Gurutalawa at the Fair. Chief Guests on all three days visited our stall, and pictures of the Chairman of the Board, His Lordship, the Bishop in our stall can be viewed on our website (www.stcguru.com) along with all other pictures of the Fair.

Coin Stall

Brig. B.Munasinghe ran a coin stall with Mr.Nihal Wanniarachchi, and many numismatists (and budding ones) showed much interest and purchased old coins. We are grateful to Brig. Munasinghe for this stall as it again showed our strong presence at the Fair, while we also thank him for all the coins exhibited and sold and which were mainly

from his collection. Mr. Medis, a senior and well known numismatist assisted and gave valuable advice to many visitors. The coin sale and raffle draw conducted, netted Rs. 1850.- after expenses. Many youngsters showed interest in the coins and in fact two of the winners in the raffle were school boys, who said the stall stimulated their interest in this hobby.

Book Stall

Mr. Duleep Kumar arranged a Book Stall through one of our well-known Old Boys, Mr.V.K.Wickremasinghe, who donated the books, most of them through the Martin Wickremasinghe Foundation (his father's) and also books donated by Mr.Duleep Kumar himself. Mr.K. Bandusena was in charge of the sales and Mr.Sumedha Perera assisted in the transport of books. The nett profit on the stall was Rs.13790.-

General

Thanks are due to the Headmaster and Mrs. Canagasabey who were there every moment from beginning to end and ensured the success of the running of the Stall. Mr.Razik and Mr. Nilam of the Gurutalawa staff helped throughout while Mr.Nesaseelan also helped on the last day. We are also grateful to Mr.Majintha Perera and his very capable nephew who sold the Souvenirs, along with Mr. Nanda Rambukpotha while Mr.Piloo Lakdawalla also assisted.

Finally our thanks to the Senior Vice President Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera for the co-ordination of all activities continuously and which no doubt contributed to the success we achieved and to Mr.Duleep Kumar who worked tirelessly to achieve the desired result.

Financial benefit to Gurutalawa from the Fair

Such was the special affection to Gurutalawa of the Mt. Lavinia OBA, that even though it was originally planned on a 50-50 split in profits, the Mt. Lavinia OBA in a magnanimous gesture agreed to a 60-40 split in favour of Gurutalawa. It is unfortunate that Mt. Lavinia Old Boys have greater love for Guru than our own Old Boys who are not opening their purse strings.

Our grateful thanks to the Mt. Lavinia OBA for their generosity.

As at 31 January 2006, the profit from the Fair is Rs.9.6 million and of which Rs. 3 million has been transferred to Gurutalawa while Mt. Lavinia received Rs.2 million as an interim distribution. Of the remaining profits, Guru can expect another Rs. 2,75 million which may go up to Rs. 3 million if some further expected dues are collected as expected.

Committee to revamping Gurutalawa

Being now fully alive to the situation at Gurutalawa, the Board of Governors appointed a small committee comprising the Treasurer of the Board, Mr. Sunil Peiris as Chairman and Mr.Christo Gonawela, Manager Gurutalawa & Board member, as convenor, and Mr. Duleep Kumar and Mr. Bandu Wanigasekera as members along with the Headmaster, to look into ways and means of effective savings and to see what steps could be taken to reconstruct Gurutalawa. The Committee met a number of times and finally met the Board of Governors on the 31st. January 2006 and discussed possible ways and means. A definite course of action will be chartered very soon.

Membership Increase

Nineteen Old Boys joined us in the course of the year. They are :

Ex-Co Meetings

Regular Meetings of the Committee were held, of which two were at Gurutalawa. Attendance is as below:

We are very grateful to Mr. Y. Casiechetty, Headmaster STC Kollupitiya for his unstinted support in making available a classroom every time we requested him for this assistance to hold our Committee Meetings. We thank him profusely.

Our Donors

We are very grateful for the following, and who have for the past few years contributed by Bankers order, monthly, quarterly or bi-annually – Mr.S.K.Wickremasinghe, Mr.Falil Caffoor, Mr.J.O.Yatawara, Mr. L.G.S.Goonawardena and this year Mr.Sisira Nanayakkara has joined them for regular remittances.

Further large donations were received from : Mr. Vijitha C. Fernando

Rs.50,000.-

Mr. Ananda Gunasena

Rs.50,000.-

Mr. Nawaz Caffoor

Rs.10,000.-

Mr. Mahinda Padmasiri

Rs.10,000.-

Mr. Asiri Galhena

Rs.10,000.-

There were others also who contributed lesser amounts and we are very grateful to them all. Since we did not have any fund raising events this year in order to put in maximum efforts for the Fair, it was these donations that helped us along. A fuller detailed list is with the accounts.

AND FINALLY

Over the year we are glad to find many areas of improvement in the College, mostly due to the personal efforts of the Headmaster, while Mrs. Canagasabey has contributed in no small measure by her great support to Mr.Canagasabey in his onerous task. They are a great husband and wife team in the illustrious footsteps of Dr. & Mrs. Hayman. Of course having hit near rock bottom, the task of rebuilding Guru is not as simple as some would think. Changes in Staff, both academic and in the office, have been always in the correct direction. Thus there is yet some hope that the OBA by very purposeful action, can help Guru to survive the crisis and rise phoenix-like from the flames. But it is not for a handful of Old Boys to virtually overwork themselves – it requires the will and the personal support of each and every one in the OBA. Let us unite and set aside personal likes and dislikes and make common cause of the single purpose of REGAINING GURU.

With the words of Dr. Hayman at the Inaugural address to the OBA in 1959 :

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 A SMALL
WAY, YOU WILL BE DOING SOMETHING TO HAND ON TO
OTHERS.....**

I will appeal to our membership once again for unity and request your personal efforts in any manner that you can render assistance either financially or by efforts in serving the OBA as a Committee Member. We need your help. Of every one of you.

ESTO PERPETUA

Shervon Fernando
Hony Secretary
For the Ex – Co.