



Dedicated to Dr. R.L. Hayman

(For his teaching and training giving the knowledge and the courage to prepare this)

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1. Introduction

A Task Force for S.Thomas' College Gurutalawa was formed by His Lordship Rev. Duleep De Chickera in February 2007 for the revival of the College. At the second Meeting of this task force, held on March 7, 2007, Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert, appointed to manage the affairs of the College and the Acting Headmaster, outlined the marketing plan for absorbing students, through advertising.

The Senior Vice President of the OBA explained that making up the numbers alone would not be enough and it was important to improve discipline and the standard of English, along with the hostel facilities and the infrastructure and developing sports, to hold back the students, as it had been found that in the past, students left as soon as they found better schools. To meet the short and medium term requirement of funds, he proposed that the College farm be developed on a commercial basis with the help of the OBA and a Master Plan prepared to cover all development.

The following is a combination of facts and proposals for the development of the College to bring it back to its old glory.

2. Land Survey and Encroachment

The Board of Governors had arranged for a survey of the College land and the 9 acre block, which had been given to College on a lease from the Government, for pastoral purposes. The survey had been carried out in 2006, but the boundary stones had not been installed. A large number of concrete boundary stones are still lying in the old laboratory.

There are several areas of encroachment by the villagers as follows:

College Land – Four shops, three in brick and one in wood have been constructed, at the junction of Boralanda-Welimada Road and Gurutalawa-Diyatalawa Road (the road leading to the grounds), since the recent widening of the road. Any other areas of encroachment have to be checked.

9 acre Block - There is a large garage constructed well within the land on Boralanda – Welimada Road. A retired member of the minor staff of College is using a long stretch of the land along the same road with vegetable plots and banana trees. At the back of the land, the bank has been cut at the bend of a minor road, probably to use the earth for the construction of the road.

Top priority would be to take necessary action to take back the encroached land. If this is going to be a long drawn affair, it would be best to come to an amicable solution, to keep peace with the villagers and to move on with the development planned, without wasting time and money.

3. Boundary fence

Regardless of the above the boundary stones should be installed immediately, wherever possible. The boundary fence in concrete posts, with intermediate fast growing trees and barbed wire is proposed to be installed in two phases, depending on the availability of funds, the first phase to cover areas vulnerable to encroachment and unauthorized points of entry and the second phase to complete the balance.

4. Police Post

With the recent arson attack and various other problems encountered in and around the College and that could be expected in the future, it is important to establish a police post at Boralanda. Approval for a police post was obtained from the Police, at the request of the OBA in 2004 and it was stalled by the non availability of a suitable building in Boralanda.

5. The Farm

The farm in Dr. Hayman's days provided chicken, eggs, vegetables and milk to boarders, with the excess sold to outside. In the recent past it has been basically chicken and eggs to the boarders. Now there is a small amount of milk in addition, with the purchase of a few cows. The farm in 2002 was running at a big loss, with stealing and malpractices leading the way and it was about to be closed down. The OBA intervened and took over the management of the farm and within two months turned it around, making a small profit with chicken only, 60% to College and the rest to outside, purely by eradicating the stealing and malpractices.

With such a large extent of land, in an environmentally suitable area, it is a pity that the land is not utilized to raise the much needed funds. The proposal in this report is to develop the farm on a commercial basis, initially, as follows:

- Broilers and layers to meet the requirements in the area, in the present premises, with improved facilities.
- Sheep and cattle in the 9 acre block
- Vegetables in the abandoned plots in College land and in the 9 acre block. All the year crops like kankung, mukunuwenna and gotukola, chilies to be grown, in addition to the other standard crops like potatoes, tomatoes, spring onions, leaks, carrots, cabbage, beans, lettuce etc.
- Orchard of fruit trees, which can bring in funds. There is a persimmon tree near the basketball court, which used to fruit in the early sixties. During Dr. Hayman's days a net was put over it, as the fruits ripened, needless to say what happened to any student, who plucked any fruit. The tree had not borne fruit since then but it is proposed that more persimmon trees and such uncommon fruit trees suitable for the climate are grown, with the view to selling unique items and to be the first from a school in Sri Lanka. (Emphasis will be on quicker yielding crops initially with some agricultural advice regarding suitability of crops to the location)
- Flower gardens which beautified the College have now become weed gardens. Fresh flowers can be a good source of income and will bring back the past beauty of the premises.
- Any other commodities considered profit making based on some advice from agriculturists.

The initial capital required for fencing, improvements to existing buildings, construction of new facilities, staffing, purchase of livestock etc. would be raised by the OBA.

The farm is to be managed totally independent of the College, by a Committee consisting of 3 Members from the OBA, Headmaster and another Representative of the staff appointed by the Headmaster, one Member of the Board of Governors, preferably the Manager of the school.

6. Co-operative Stores and Bakery

Co-operative Stores is another area, where College is not receiving its dues. It has been given to individuals to run and make profits. It has a huge potential to make profits while giving a good service to everyone in the premises and the area. It is proposed that the Co-operative Stores is run by a Committee similar to the one proposed for the Farm. A survey should be carried out to determine the needs of the people at College and the area and the facilities expanded to suit. A shop can be constructed by the Boralanda- Gurutalawa Road, with access from the front and the back, to serve the outsiders and the school, respectively.

The bakery which met the requirements of bread, buns and cake had been closed down two years ago. It should be re-commissioned.

7. Bio Gas Plant

A digester was constructed by the OBA, in 2003, for treating all kitchen waste to generate biogas for cooking and bio fertilizer for the vegetables. It was successfully commissioned to produce biogas, but a gas leak from the roof of the digester, prevented it from being used as intended. It is proposed that remedial work to seal the gas leaks of the digester is carried out and the plant is re-commissioned for the intended purposes. Additional digesters could be added to meet any excess waste.

8. Water Supply and Distribution

Shortage of water during dry season has always been a problem at College. The largest well near Keble was damaged by a fallen tree and it was reconstructed in 2004 by the OBA. There are 8 other wells, some now abandoned, supplying water to various quarters. A deep well was drilled by the Water Board, courtesy of an Old Boy, a Deputy Minister in charge of the particular Department in 2003. It is however known that the deep well was not drilled to the proposed depth due to bad coordination by the College staff during the construction of the well, resulting in the well not giving the expected output. The water supply is still inadequate and the expected increase in student numbers will further increase the demand.

The solution is to increase the yield of the existing wells by horizontal drilling, in which case the well near Keble and the one below the squash courts could be utilized. The other alternative is to provide additional deep wells and to harvest rain water, as proposed below.

The supply from the Water Board is available at two points to supply water to some staff quarters and this should be used to supplement or as standby.

The distribution system has been modified from its original system of supplying from various wells to various areas, to a network of interconnecting pipes provided by make-shift plumbers, to meet the immediate needs as they arose. There have been many leaky points in the system due to unsuitable work done.

The whole distribution system needs to be redesigned, taking into account, the enhanced supplies. The existing service tanks and header tanks made of brick are in a poor state, requiring regular repairs. The construction of a central tank or a water tower of adequate capacity is a must.

9. Water Treatment Plant

The water from the wells is extremely turbid, especially during wet weather and is currently supplied without any treatment. It is important to test the water and purify, if necessary.

10. Swimming Pool

The swimming pool equipment is over 50 yrs old and the system is primitive with manual dosing of chemicals. A total refurbishment of the swimming pool and machinery is necessary to meet the required standards.

11. College Grounds and Sports

With the Cricket Association of Sri Lanka showing interest in developing the turf wicket at the grounds, laid in 1998, now requiring complete relaying, there is hope that the grounds will be drastically improved with fencing, new pavilion, security etc. However development of areas not covered by the Cricket Association will have to be undertaken by others.

The standard of sports has dropped due to lack of facilities, equipment and experienced coaches. The tennis court is non-existent. To raise the level of sports, better facilities, equipment and experienced coaches are required. Horse riding, which is proposed to be re-introduced, has already become a reality, by the courtesy of Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert.

12. Headmaster's Bungalow and Staff Quarters

The Headmaster's bungalow requires a total refurbishment, with completely new toilets. The staff quarters are in an appalling condition and construction of new family and single quarters is required.

13. Buildings

Most buildings are either in a condition for demolition or require extensive repairs. The work here should be carried out in stages, depending on urgency and on an overall architectural planned layout as presently, ad hoc siting of buildings has marred the scenic beauty of the premises.

14. Architectural Plan

Flower gardens, beautifully cut hedges are things of the past at College. An architectural plan with the help of a good architect would no doubt be a great attraction, probably making the College the most beautiful school in the country.

15. Sewage Treatment Plant

With nearly 500 persons concentrated in a small area, conditions are ideal to provide a small sewage treatment plant at College. The resulting sludge could be used as fertilizer and the final effluent for the vegetables, a huge saving of water at a time the whole world is faced with a shortage of water. The topography is ideally suited to provide a sewage treatment plant with minimum costs. College can boast of another first, once this is provided.

16. Rain Harvesting

Again STC Gurutalawa can be a first, in introducing rain harvesting. With all buildings at high level rain water can easily be collected very economically and directed to the proposed water treatment plant. Even without treatment it may be used in the farm or as make-up water for the swimming pool. Another first for College.

17. Staff

Majority of the academic staff are women, who do not contribute for extra curricular activities. Also those who live in the premises should be those who can and will contribute for these activities. The question of staff both academic and non academic should be addressed with a long term view. A restructure of the staff is therefore essential. A reevaluation of extra allowances paid to staff is also necessary and any payment should be related to the adequacy of return.

Maintenance in every way is extremely poor and a scheme and staff for proper routine and preventative maintenance should be established. It is suggested that a Supervisor with initiative be charged with the responsibility to see that facilities like lighting and plumbing be looked at very regularly and prompt action taken to correct as otherwise the students also get used to lowered standards in housekeeping and cleanliness.

At the recommendation of the OBA preparation of inventories commenced in 2004 and that seems to have died a natural death.

18. Discipline and English

Discipline of students and both academic and minor staff has deteriorated over the years. The standard of English is extremely poor, with majority of the staff unable to speak English. The College had a good reputation in these two fronts and the main reason for the failure to absorb students and to retain those admitted can be attributed to their deterioration. With the recent appointment of Mr. Jacques Huyghebaert, an unexpected numbers of students have been admitted and action has been taken to improve discipline. It is important that various levels of punishment, such as writing lines, detention, Saturday school, suspension and sacking are introduced, for various levels of misdemeanour and misbehaviour committed.

Similarly positive action is needed to improve the standard of English and in this regard employment of British teachers through voluntary organizations would be one of the solutions until good English teachers are recruited.

Improvement in Discipline and English should go hand in hand with the development of the infrastructure, sports and other fields, as money spent on development of the latter would be a total waste otherwise.

19. Food

The quality of food had deteriorated over the years, partly due rise in costs and partly due to bad management. OBA introduced diet sheets, based on food value a few years ago, but to no avail. Malpractices in purchasing needs addressing and the quality of food improved and wastages minimised.

20. House System

The House system as it exists now does not give the student the feeling of belonging to a House. The system should be re-organized, so that there are four Houses Read, De Saram, Garnier and Hayman, with Junior and Senior dormitories. The introduction of so called Dorm Masters has failed to produce the expected results, due to their inadequacies and it is important to concentrate on the house system with more responsible and diligent housemasters and assistant housemasters.

21. Auditors

The OBA carried out an independent audit of the affairs at College, using a reputed Audit Company in 2003 and it highlighted all the discrepancies in the accounts, and malpractices, in the system. Even though copies of this report were given to the necessary parties and referred to regularly, as irregularities continued, none of the recommendations in the report were followed. The Auditors who have carrying out the auditing for the past so many years have failed to find out the discrepancies, malpractices, irregularities etc. in the accounting system, judging by the recent findings. It is therefore strongly recommended that the services of the current Auditors are discontinued.

22. Security

The security system at College leaves much to be desired. The security staff has not been trained and the records are not kept properly. Access to the College premises should be only through the main gate and the one near the old tennis courts, to prevent students loitering outside and the outsiders entering the premises. Provision of the boundary fence as early as possible, would help to achieve this.

23. Public Relations

The divisions within the staff, both academic and minor have spread to the villages around the College and it has not helped in solving various problems that arise. It is important to develop good public relations with the villagers to improve the situation, while attending to it within the staff at College. As an initial step, the OBA is making arrangements to donate several computers to village schools around the College, from a consignment of computers expected to be sent by a Rotary Club in Australia to a Rotary Club in Sri Lanka on the initiative of an Old Boy.

24. Programme for Implementation

Basically the recommendations are to be implemented under three stages, immediate, short term and medium term, as follows:

Immediate

Farm Development and Boundary Fence
Co-operative Stores and Bakery
Police Post
Bio Gas Plant

Immediate (continued)

Architectural Plan with layout
College Grounds and Sports
House System, Discipline and English
Staff and Security
Auditors
Public Relations
Staff (Maintenance Supervisor)

Short Term (Within 2 years)

Water Supply and Distribution
Water Treatment
Rain Harvesting
Headmaster's Bungalow
Staff Quarters
Swimming Pool
Some of the Buildings

Medium Term (Within 2- 4 years)

Sewage Treatment Plant
Remaining Buildings

25. Conclusions

This Master Plan is a combination of facts and recommendations for development of a wide and unique range of facilities, linked to the improvement in discipline and English. Once it is implemented S.Thomas' College Gurutalawa can boast to be the only school in the country, if not the world, to have such facilities and utilities, providing education and experience, no other school can provide. Only a brief description is given under each item at this stage. Acceptance in principle by the Board of Governors to develop the farm and the Cooperative stores is now required, to proceed to the next step of preparing a feasibility report and to raise the necessary funds, for the proposed work.