

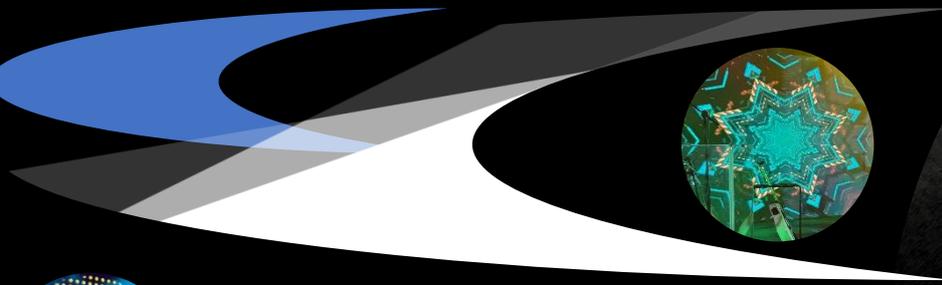


# THOMIANA



January 2025, Volume 28 Issue 1

Publication of S. Thomas' College Old Boys Association, Australia Branch Inc.  
PO Box 2337. Mt. Waverley, Victoria 3149, Australia



## Thomian Ball 2024



Once again, this was the  
place to be ....

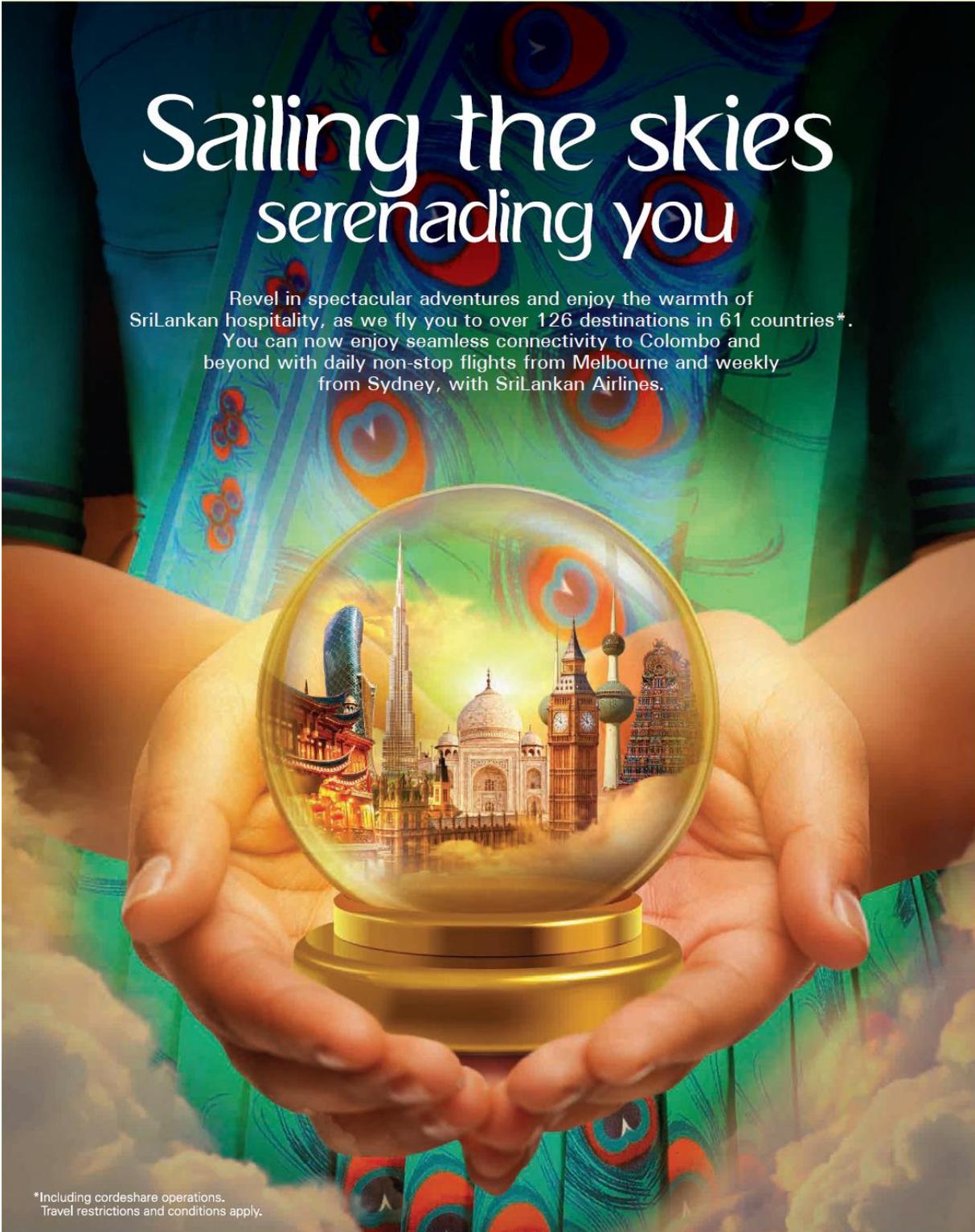
*Oh Darling...  
Save the Last Dance for Me*



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S. THOMAS' COLLEGE OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION -AUSTRALIA BRANCH (STCOBA)



S. Thomas' College is an Anglican, Government approved, private, fee-paying School for boys founded in 1851 by the first Bishop of Colombo, the Rt. Rev'd Dr. James Chapman. The school was originally located in Mutwal and moved to its present campus at Mount Lavinia in 1918.

S. Thomas' College is much more than just a school. It is an institution rich in tradition, characterized by more than one and a half centuries of hard work, dedication and achievement, all infused with the legendary "Thomian Spirit". It is a pioneering institution that seeks to incorporate the challenges and opportunities of the modern world in nurturing the very best in youth, where mere boys come in and young adults go out to be integrated "men and gentlemen always".

**History of the OBA:**

STCOBA Australia Branch was established in 1972 and is based in Melbourne, Victoria; and is the first Thomian OBA to be formed overseas. The membership is predominantly from Victoria and also includes other states in Australia and overseas.

The founders were a group of old Thomians who migrated to Australia after their primary and secondary studies at S. Thomas' College in Sri Lanka in the early 1960s and 1970s.

**Mission:**

The main purpose, of the Thomian OBA, is to foster fellowship amongst Old Thomians in Australia and to raise funds that can be channelled to the Thomian fraternity of schools in Sri Lanka (Mount Lavinia, Kollupitiya, Bandarawela and Gurutalawa).

Esto Perpetua

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## President's Message

Dear Fellow Thomians,

As the warmth of summer fills our days, I am delighted to reach out to you through this edition of *Thomiana*, reflecting on the spirit of community and gratitude that defines us as proud alumni of S. Thomas' College.

**A Note of Gratitude for a Memorable Carol Service:** Our annual Carol Service was nothing short of magnificent, a true testament to the Thomian spirit of excellence and reverence. The heartfelt hymns, masterfully orchestrated arrangements, and angelic voices transported us to a realm of serenity and joy. I extend my deepest gratitude to the Dr. Reverend Keerthisiri Fernando, Choir Master Felix Bartholomeusz whose leadership and guidance infused the service with spiritual richness, to our gifted choristers and the dedicated organisers who worked tirelessly to create a night to remember. The success of this event reaffirms our commitment to upholding the traditions that make S. Thomas' College so special.

**Supporting the Lower School Library Renovation:** Looking ahead, we still have an important mission that requires your support—the renovation of the Lower School Library at Mount Lavinia. This iconic space, a sanctuary of learning for generations of Thomians, is in need of vital upgrades to ensure it continues to inspire and educate the young minds who walk through its doors. To this end, we have launched a GoFundMe campaign. This endeavour reflects our collective responsibility as alumni to give back to the institution that shaped our values, character, and futures. Every donation, regardless of size, is a step closer to achieving this meaningful goal. I invite you to visit our GoFundMe page <https://gofund.me/e3a960a8> and contribute generously. Please share this campaign within your networks to amplify its reach. Together, we can ensure that this vital project is brought to fruition, leaving a lasting legacy for future Thomians.

**The Thomian Spirit in Action:** As we embark on this journey of giving back, let us draw inspiration from the unwavering unity and generosity that have always been the hallmark of the Thomian spirit. Each one of us has a role to play in preserving and enhancing the legacy of S. Thomas' College. Thank you for your continued support and dedication to our alma mater. Whether it is through attending events, participating in initiatives, or contributing to this campaign, your involvement makes a significant impact.

**2025 Upcoming Events:** In the months ahead, we have a range of exciting events and initiatives designed to strengthen our community and create meaningful opportunities for all. Your involvement and enthusiasm are key to making these efforts successful, and I warmly encourage each of you to take part.

May this summer bring you peace, joy, and a renewed sense of purpose. Let us come together to ensure that the light of S. Thomas' College shines brightly for generations to come.  
Esto Perpetua

Sincerely

*Saman Liyanage*

## EDITORIAL

*“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”*

Another year over and a new one has just begun .... on behalf of the Executive Committee (Ex-Co) of the OBA, we express our best wishes for a great New Year to all our readers in Australia and overseas and send all our love and good wishes for an awesome year.

The last year closed with a tinge of sadness, when the Thomian fraternity had to say farewell to the Warden, the Revd. Marc Billimoria who finished his tenure after a decade; and a total of 17 years combined with his time in the academic staff and Headmaster at Gurutalawa. We were privileged to host Revd. Marc during his many visits to Melbourne and always looked forward to the finale – rendition of “Sweet Caroline”!!

Activities in the last quarter of 2024 included the key event of the year – Thomian Ball 2024, and also the Melbourne Cup Draw and the Carol Service. The dance reverted to Pullman Albert Park in order to cater to a larger crowd. Our thanks to the Dance Committee for their untiring efforts to keep the traditions alive. It was encouraging to get positive feedback although we would have preferred a larger attendance. There are many new challenges facing social events, especially due to the significant increase in Sri Lankan functions. The Committee conducted a critical review of all aspects of the dance and the outcome would be reflected in the next dance. One

consideration is for the event to be held early in the year, preferably in the second quarter in order to avoid the rush of Sri Lankan events.

The Melbourne Cup Draw was held once again on the first Tuesday of November. This horse race that brings the “nation to a halt”, provided a much-needed opportunity to raise some funds for the OBA’s current projects.

The final event was the Carol Service held in a new venue - St. Peter’s Church, Murrumbena, to encourage greater participation especially from those living closer to the City. The performance of the 30+ choir was well appreciated by the record crowd attending the service.

The AGM, scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> of February 2025, is slightly later than normal due to the unavailability of the venue on the first Friday of the month and Valentines Day the following week. It appears that Valentines Day is not an issue in Sri Lanka where the AGM at Mount Lavinia maintained the tradition of having it on the second Friday in February.

The Ex-Co is likely to see some new faces this year following intended resignations and hopeful that “younger” members would raise their hands to serve in the Committee. The composition will be finalised at the AGM.

The only event confirmed for the first half of the new year is the Melbourne Royal-Thomian Cricket

Matches scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025. It is expected that, after the AGM, the new Executive Committee will review the Calendar of Events for the year and finalise the other events.

The membership of the OBA last year saw the addition of 16 new members which was lower than the previous year. It is evident that there have been a large number of Old Boys who have come to Australia and many residing in Victoria. Encouraging them to join the OBA has been a real challenge and we are seeking help from the existing members in this regard. We have now simplified the Membership Application Form to streamline the process.

As reported earlier, in consultation with the Warden, the OBA has ventured on an ambitious project to upgrade the Lower School Library. Proceeds from several events last year have been channelled to this cause. In spite of this there is a significant shortfall and as a result being unable to commence the project. Currently, there is an on-going appeal via GoFundMe and are depending on the generosity of well-wishers to reach the goal.

Finally, we appeal to our readers to send us any interesting articles relating to your college days and beyond that could be considered for publication in the Thomiana.

*Upali Gooneratne*  
Editor



OBA News

THOMIAN BALL 2024



Based on the unprecedented demand for tickets in 2023 that resulted in some missing out, the Dance Committee opted for a larger venue; the Pullman Albert Park ticked all the boxes and was chosen for hosting the event on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2024. This hotel (formerly called *The Radisson*) has been the venue for the dance on several occasions over the years.

In spite of competing with several other Sri Lankan events, the attendance met our expectations, comprising Old Thomians of different vintages. As in the past, everyone was treated to a memorable evening, following the program of previous years including pre-dinner cocktails in the foyer, a sumptuous 3-course dinner combined with an extensive range of complimentary drinks.

The added attraction this year was the engagement of one of Sri Lanka’s most popular dance bands – *Taxi*, who flew into Melbourne the day before the event. They kept the “feet moving” with a breathtaking performance and aptly complimented by the local band, *Redemption*, who has been a regular feature in several previous dances.

The décor was stunning with a multi-color theme for lighting in the hall coupled with matching table décor. All guests were recipients of a special gift of engraved Hot Water Flask and the Dance souvenir. The Raffle included several attractive prizes including a holiday in Sri Lanka with two return air tickets with compliments of Sri Lankan Airlines.

Corporate sponsorships played an important part in the success of the dance. Our appreciation to our main sponsor Tomorrow Financial Solutions (TFS) and Number 8 Property Group, and all other sponsors, advertisers and donors for their generosity.

Link for Dance Photos: <https://bluetulipscreative.smugmug.com/Events/Thomian-Ball-2024/n-XXffmS/i-TFk4rKM>

MELBOURNE CUP DRAW – 5 NOVEMBER 2024



This popular fundraising event which was first organized in 2020, was successfully completed with the commitment of channeling the proceeds to the Lower School Library Project.

Our appreciation to all those who supported this event which has now become a regular feature in the OBA Calendar.



**FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS**



STC OBA Carol Service 2024 was held at St. Peter’s Church, Murrumbena on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 6 pm. This was the final OBA activity for the year and the Committee was keen to finish well with a grand service. The attendance exceeded our expectations.

The choir comprising of old Thomians and ladies with Thomian connections had weekly practices since early September and concluded with a rehearsal in early December. The Choir was directed by Herbert (Felix) Bartholomeusz and accompanied by the talented organist Ashan De Silva. The choristers had great fun and fellowship with light refreshments after practices.

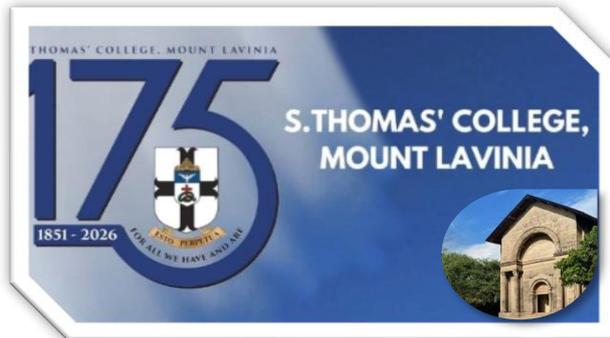


Right Reverend Dr Keerthisiri Fernando conducted the service. In addition to the special English carols there was one Sinhala and Tamil Carol sung with pride and emotion by the whole congregation supported by the choir. The service was followed by light refreshments and the presentation of gifts to the choristers and kids. The collection taken at the service was distributed between St. Aidan’s church (in appreciation for their help in choir practices) and the Deaf and Blind School in Ratmalana, Sri Lanka.

Our appreciation to the organizing committee comprising of Rayesh Gunasekera, Lalindra De Silva, Rajindra Bibile and Vasikaran Ratnarajah for coordinating the event.



## News from Sri Lanka



A special service of Thanksgiving to launch the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations will be held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025 at Christ Church Mutwal at 6pm.

*Esto Perpetua – For all we have and are*

## FIRST EVER THOMIAN JKF KARATE COACH



**Harinda Fonseka**, an Old Thomian and coach of the College Karate team, was appointed as a Japan Karate Federation Wado Kai karate coach.

This appointment is a significant milestone for S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, as it marks the first such appointment in the 34-year history of karate at STC.

The Fraternity extends their congratulations to Sensei Harinda, and also for his efforts behind the recent achievements of the young Thomian Karatekas.

## THOMIANS IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT



### **Dr. Hans Wijayasuriya appointed Chief Advisor to President on Digital Economy**

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has appointed Dr Hans Wijayasuriya as the Chief Advisor to the President on Digital Economy. President Dissanayake has espoused and reiterated a bold vision and personal commitment to elevate Sri Lanka's digital economy to a level on par with the most advanced nations in the region, envisaging acceleration of economic growth, national competitiveness and delivery of tangible benefits to all citizens.

The Government is strongly committed to multi-sectoral digital transformation through the elevation of Sri Lanka's information and communication technology and digital infrastructure sectors to global standards, and the establishment of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to deliver inclusive citizen empowerment. The government plans, accordingly, to exploit technological advancement to enable the capture of leap-frog opportunities with respect to economic and social development leading to a progressive digital economy and an enhanced quality of life for all citizens. Dr Wijayasuriya's appointment is a key move with regard to bringing to fruition the above vision.

Born to P. M. W. Wijayasuriya, a former auditor general of Sri Lanka and Susila Wijayasuriya, a painter, Hans was educated at S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka. He graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1989 with a degree in electrical and electronic engineering. He later obtained his PhD in



Digital Mobile Communications from the University of Bristol in 1994. A Chartered Engineer and Fellow of the Institution of Engineering Technology UK, Wijayasuriya also holds an MBA from the University of Warwick UK.

### **Dileepa Pieris and Shanil Kularatne appointed as President's Counsel**



A proud day for STC as distinguished Old Boys Mr. Dileepa Pieris, Additional Solicitor General and Mr. Shanil Kularatne Additional Solicitor General were appointed as President's Counsel.

They took oaths as Presidents Counsel before the Supreme Court with justices of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, judges of the High Court, District Court and Magistrates, Presidents Counsel and Attorneys at Law in attendance.

### **STC OBA GEARS UP TO HOST FUTUREX IN JANUARY 2025**

The Old Boys' Association of S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia (STCMLOBA) is prepping to host FutureX, a groundbreaking education and career fair on January 25-26, 2025, to be held at the Hilton Colombo Grand Marquee from 10.00am to 8.00pm. This initiative is a bid to transform the landscape of career exploration and educational advancement in Sri Lanka.



Seen in the picture from left are FutureX organising committee Chairman Rukshan Kuru-Utumpala, Acting Sub Warden Asanka Perera and STCMLOBA Secretary Imran Hassan at a press conference held in connection with the upcoming event.

Speaking at a media briefing held in connection with the upcoming event, Rukshan Kuru-Utumpala, Chairman, FutureX Organizing Committee said that the STCMLOBA is one of the oldest alumni institutions founded in 1886. "It has a rich history and legacy, but while we are proud of our history and heritage, we need to look at what we could offer the next generation of students to further their careers. Hence, we came up with this concept of FutureX because some of the traditional jobs are now becoming obsolete and a new plethora of different careers, jobs and tech-related opportunities are opening up," he added.

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***FutureX will feature over 50 credible higher education and career guidance institutions***

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In his remarks, Acting Sub Warden Asanka Perera underscored the importance of helping children to find their careers. "As one of the few schools which has career guidance units, we encourage as many students as possible to find opportunities; whether in local universities or foreign universities and to build their careers. It is with this goal in mind that the OBA is organizing this event for the school. Unlike in the past there are plenty of opportunities for students post A/Ls. We are bringing a wide range of educational and career pathways which the children would definitely be able to excel in. This event is not only restricted to students in Colombo. They are welcome to talk to their future places of work which they will find useful. By doing that we are growing an entire society who will be able to get into any good places of work," said Perera.

He further said that it has become a trend for children to leave schools after O/Ls. "They would find a foundation course and then move on. From the school's perspective we feel that by doing so, students maybe missing out on some of the best years of their lives. "You get to grow in your school and live your childhood because you get it only once. This is why we encourage students to do both their O/Ls and A/Ls before moving to pursue higher education," he underscored.

"One of the main goals of the organizing committee is to provide a solution for many students who sit for their A/L exams. "We know that out of the hundreds and thousands of children who sit for the exam, only 20% get selected to local universities," said STCMLOBA Secretary Imran Hassan. "Around 80% of them don't get selected to universities even if they pass the exam. This education and career fair will therefore show them the available higher education opportunities," said Hassan.

FutureX will feature over 50 credible higher education and career guidance institutions including local and international universities and colleges, business schools, graduate schools and institutes, technical and vocational training institutes, computer and IT training centers, medical and nursing colleges, engineering colleges, hospitality and culinary arts schools, language and communication institutes, creative and design schools among others.

Visitors will have the opportunity to network with leading education institutions and employees who can guide their career pathways, helping them explore wide range of programmes tailor-made to their interests and skills. Students can also participate in workshops, seminars and discussions that would enhance their understanding of various fields. These programmes would help empower and equip visitors with knowledge and connections necessary to make informed decisions about their future.

*Courtesy: Daily Mirror 7 November 2024*

## White Christmas at College... Only a dream!!



## Forthcoming Events



S. Thomas' College, Old Boys Association,  
Australian Branch Inc.

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**DATE:** Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025

**TIME:** 6.30 p.m. Registration; Meeting commences at 7.00 p.m.

**VENUE:** **Notting Hill Community Hall,**  
386, Ferntree Gully Road, Notting Hill, Vic 3168



## Royal Thomian Cricket Encounter

### Melbourne





Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Greaves Reserve, Bennet Street, Dandenong

Dandenong Reserve

For more information:  
Peneeth Goonawardena – 0404 213 166





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## Letter to the Old Boys.....



S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia

06<sup>th</sup> December 2024



Dear Fellow Thomian,

Greetings from the School by the Sea.

By now you will be aware that I will be laying down my charge as the 19<sup>th</sup> Warden of the College on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

As I prepare to move on after 17 years of service to S. Thomas' College, first at Gurutalawa and then at Mount Lavinia, I have been reflecting on the past ten years as Warden and wish to address some matters of importance to you all, the sons of Thomiana.

Firstly, and foremostly, I consider it my duty to place on record my thanks to all old boys in Sri Lanka and overseas, for your expressions of solidarity and financial support extended to the College during my tenure. Thanking each of you is just not possible but I am exceedingly grateful for the loyalty and generosity towards your alma mater that have made so much possible. As a private fee levying school that does not receive any financial aid from the state or from the church, we are solely dependent on the munificence of our old boys for the numerous infrastructure projects that are undertaken from time to time. In my tenure there have been many such projects, large, medium and small, too numerous to itemize in this letter, that have been possible only due to this support and on behalf of the present and future students of the College I say – Thank You!

Secondly, I wish to acknowledge the role of old boys in helping the College in numerous other ways: the sharing of your time and talents, skills and expertise. Whether it has been through your participation in the various sports development committees and support groups that have been set up over the years or through your services given free of charge to the College as architects, engineers, lawyers, doctors, or any other professionals, for all your many labours of love with which you have repaid your nurture fee to your alma mater I say – Thank you!

I am acutely aware that we have old boys of all sorts and of many different levels of involvement and loyalty in our fraternity. Despite this I must state unequivocally that throughout my ten years in office while there have been differing opinions, there have been no lasting conflicts among us, and we have all worked in the long-term best interests and the common good of the College and its present students.

My tenure is ending as I would wish it to end – entirely on my terms. I have always felt that one must move on when one has achieved all that one has aspired to achieve in and for an institution. Overstaying can only lead to hurt and disappointment. I am leaving with a heart that is full and brimming with thanksgiving for all that has been possible. What S. Thomas' needs now is an educator with a far more modern outlook on education than I have, one who can face the challenge of AI and smart technology and who can combine the best of the past with the best of the future, and from my point of view at least I believe the right man has been identified.

For those who may not still be aware, the Board of Governors has decided to appoint the current Sub Warden, Mr Asanka S. Perera, a young Thomian that I handpicked for that position in 2016, to be Acting



Warden from 1st January 2025. He is an Electrical & Electronic engineer, a First Class Honours graduate of the University of Northumbria in Newcastle, United Kingdom, who gave up a career in the field to take up teaching at College in 2013. He brings to the task many gifts and skills and a Thomian disposition. A man of faith, courage and unimpeachable integrity he will undoubtedly take the College forward in all spheres. He has an excellent team of staff to support him among whom are some stalwart old Thomians. As I move on and hand over the baton to Asanka, I humbly request that you will all offer him your fullest support and your unstinted cooperation to accomplish the task of taking our alma mater to the next level.

It has been the greatest privilege of my life to have been able to serve our alma mater. It has not been without its challenges and I daresay the years 2019 to 2022 were the most challenging for obvious reasons. However, by faith and by united action we overcame the challenges together and stayed the course. I hand over a community committed to excellence in all our activities whether in the classroom or in sports or other extra-curricular activities; a diverse community committed to the full inclusion of all, in which every child is valued and every child is provided the space and opportunity to thrive and flourish; a community committed to producing integrated young men with an all-round formation to meet the challenges of the modern world. We have not always got everything right but we have and will always keep striving to do so.

On St Thomas' Day, 21st December 1849 when he laid the foundation stone for the College at Mutwal, Bishop James Chapman, our Founder preached a sermon in which he made the following statement: "In building for God, in working, in spending for God, we run no venture, we hazard no loss, we cherish no vague or uncertain hopes. Though unseen, when grounded on true faith, hope is never unreal. Enduring works are often of humble beginnings." We have endured for nearly 175 years – wars, natural calamities such as coal dust, pandemics and social upheavals have not been able to stop our journey. We have endured and we have prevailed.

That pioneering spirit fires us still and so I call upon you all as we prepare to celebrate the 175 years of our existence to continue to rally round the College flag and do all we can to ensure that our alma mater goes from strength to strength.

I bid you all adieu and wish you all God's blessings.

Esto Perpetua – for all we have and are.

The Rev'd Marc Billimoria  
19th Warden  
S. Thomas' College  
Mount Lavinia

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## **A Tribute to The Reverend Marc Billimoria: A Man of Faith, Wisdom, and Profound Impact**

Today, as the 19th Warden of S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Rev. Marc Billimoria retires after an extraordinary tenure spanning over 5,000 days, it is both a privilege and a deeply personal moment to reflect on a man whose influence has been profound, enduring, and transformative.

My first memory of Rev. Billimoria goes back to my childhood. I was just 11 years old, sitting in the College Chapel, mesmerized by a sermon that was as compelling as it was thought-provoking. Though I was only a boy, the eloquence and depth of his words left an indelible mark on me. Years later, as a Thomian myself,



I came to know this man not just as a preacher but as a teacher, guide, and friend—roles he would embody with a rare blend of discipline, compassion, and wisdom.

In College, Rev. Billimoria was not merely a disciplinarian; he was a mentor who cultivated dialogue and mutual respect. In the classroom and beyond, he exemplified the Thomian ideal of shaping young men to lead with integrity. His ability to connect with students—whether through spirited discussions or quiet guidance—left an impression on everyone fortunate enough to cross his path. He always knew what to say and when to say it. Many leaders can only aspire to learn this characteristic from him.

One moment stands out as a testament to his care and humanity. On the eve of Old Boys' Day, during a particularly hectic time, I fell ill. When he learned of this, he didn't chastise me for my neglect of self-care. Instead, he took me to his home, where his wife, Manisha Onawale Manisha Billimoria, kindly prepared a warm meal that revived both my body and spirit. It was an act of kindness that spoke volumes about the man he was—one who saw the person behind the student and always went the extra mile to nurture those in his care.

As life took its natural course, Rev. Billimoria's roles in my life expanded. From teacher and confidant, he became the pastor who married me and my wife Shanaz De Lanerolle and later baptized our child, Khalia. In every role, he demonstrated a steadfast commitment to faith, family, and community—a hallmark of his leadership both in the church and the schools he served.

When he took over S. Thomas' College, Gurutalawa, during a period of financial instability, he brought his characteristic blend of vision, pragmatism, and unshakeable faith. Through tireless effort and inspired leadership, he steered the school back to stability, proving once again his ability to transform any challenge into an opportunity for growth.

As Warden of S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, Rev. Billimoria led the College through some of the most challenging periods in its history. From the aftermath of the Easter Bombings to the unprecedented disruptions of COVID-19 and the trials of an economic downturn, he ensured that the College remained steadfast, resilient, and true to its mission. His leadership during these times exemplified his courage, grace, and unwavering commitment to the institution and its people.

Today, I witnessed yet another example of his rare character. In his farewell address, Rev. Billimoria humbly apologized to anyone he may have hurt along the way, acknowledging his regrets and the lessons learned. In his own words, he admitted that there are things he would do differently if given a second chance. This profound act of humility sets him apart, as not many leaders would have the grace to reflect so honestly or the courage to make such a public confession.

On a personal note, it was a bittersweet moment to watch my nephew, Yohan, who was fortunate to have shared his years at College under Rev. Billimoria's leadership, escort the 19th Warden out of the Chapel this morning as the senior sacristan. It was a poignant reminder of the legacy he leaves behind—a legacy of faith, service, and transformation.

As we bid farewell, we look back with gratitude for all he has done, and forward with hope for all that lies ahead for him.

"Lord, Thou hast brought us to our journey's end: Once more to Thee our thankful prayers ascend: Once more we stand to praise Thee for the past; Grant prayer and praise be honest at the last."

Esto Perpetua.

***Ishan De Lanerolle***





### Royal Thomian Nostalgia - Home thoughts from abroad

*"Back to STC Happy land. Happy land  
I'm going to buy my ticket if I can."*

So went the refrain from a popular song we sang as boys usually in the College bus from Mt Lavinia and the Oval at Wanathamulla and back. Then came the variety of imaginative and colourful verses made up by the players of the popular games of which cricket was king, for instance;

*"Once I was a cricketer and a jolly good cricketer too  
Now I've given up stroking and don't know what to do  
I'm going to buy my ticket if I can"*

...and so on with the lusty chorus "Back to STC happy land". This was a happy and carefree time, my school days at S. Thomas' 1959-'71. Now more than half a century later, working as a doctor in Adelaide, Australia, I seem to be building up an adrenaline rush to attend my first Royal Thomian in 27 years with past memories of sentimentality flooding in and threatening to

overwhelm me and reduce me to a schoolboy again.

During my days at College the very idea of not attending the Royal Thomian would be sacrilege, it was simply the most important event in a Thomian's calendar. I hail from a 'true blue' Thomian family where the year's big event is the Royal Thomian cricket match. My grandfather and father attended S. Thomas' at Mutwal and Mt Lavinia respectively. Our family had many uncles who attended S. Thomas' and 3 who attended Royal, which always ensured a lively conversation at family gatherings before matches. My mother's father E.H. Perera, who got 5 wickets in the 1920 Big Match, played in the '20/21 Thomian teams alongside Lankatilleke, Bulankulame, C.E.L (Kalla) De Silva, Hinton Seneviratne (father of Sarath) and C.H Davidson who later became Warden. My



father's uncle was D.A.W Gunawardena, keeper in the 1928 match whose teammates were the famous batsman Roy Hermon, A.J.D.N Selvadurai and Dudley Senanayake, our much-loved former Prime Minister.

My earliest cricketing memories were from 1959 bowling a tennis ball underarm at my grandfather who by then was chair bound on his 'haansi putuwa' (a reclining chair). He batted with a rolled-up copy of the Ceylon Daily News providing an exciting commentary featuring Thomian stalwarts of yore. He once told me that he usually got the opposing captain out. I had accepted this benignly crediting him with some artistic licence until I read with some pride when the history of the Royal Thomian match was published in its 125<sup>th</sup> year in 2004 that he indeed took the wicket of the Royal captain, Rutnam, in 1920!

My grandfather, at Warden Saram's request, when College was in Kandy just after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War with S. Thomas' being converted to a military hospital at the time had hosted the Thomian team at his house 'Shangri-La' in Dehiwala. Perhaps his enthusiastic hospitality was blamed when Royal won that year in 1946.

I had the privilege to represent S. Thomas' in the under 12, under 16 and 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 teams, but though in the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 pool when Duleep Mendis was appointed captain in 1971, did not play for the 1<sup>st</sup> X1. S. Thomas' was very strong in those days and I simply wasn't good enough. Though this has been a lifelong regret, looking back I'm quite proud of this as a reflection of the standard of Thomian cricket at the time as since then I have played Sara Trophy cricket for 3 seasons and played grade cricket in England, New Zealand and Australia.

Having been taken to my first Royal Thomian in '59 by my parents when STC was captained by Denis Ferdinands, the tall fast bowler, I was first smitten by Big Match fever. "A draw in favour of S. Thomas'" my father, Lakshman, who had been the reserve wicketkeeper in Warden Saram's time, had proclaimed to my mother, as we headed out to our car threading our way through throngs of revellers laughing and singing, punctuated by explosive shouts of "PARIPPU!" the reference to

the gold, or yellow, on the Royal flag, debased to the colour of lentils.

The very words "Royal Thomian" evokes waves of nostalgia locked deep in the recesses in the distant memories of my formative years. S Thomas' finest, the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 team, smart in cricket whites on immaculate green grounds-the beautiful striking colours of blue, black and blue caps worn by the team as they cantered us purposefully from the gloom of the pavilion into the sunlight after tea. Wonderful memories of the giants of yore who by their performances in one magic weekend had turned into legends in the Thomian cricketing pantheon forever.



Names on a roll of honour such as Denis Ferdinands, C.K.T Labrooy, Randy Morrell, R.M Fernando, M.L Idroos, Palitha Wanduragala, Maurice Fairweather, Roger and

Lorensz D'Silva, the Reid brothers Claude, Ronnie, Buddy, Barney and 'Tiny', Premlal Gunasekera the captain of our unforgettable and invincible 1964 team, Sarath Seneviratne who scored a dashing 96 in '64 and when captaining the next year was tragically caught in the slips for 97, earning immortality in Thomian memory and the record books, like Bradman's average stuck on 99.94 as a result of being bowled for nought in his last Test appearance. The names of the heroes of yore are, of course, too many to mention but it would be hard for me to omit the sheer grace and artistry of Anura Tennakoon's batting, the firecracker opening partnership of Ajith Jayasekera and David Ponniah, at a time when Geoffrey Boycott wrote the manual for opening batsmen whose purpose was to 'take the shine off the new ball', a creed much later torched by our mercurial Sri Lankan openers Sanath and Kalu. Duleep Mendis's attacking and Caribbean style of play and total dominance of the Royal attack in his blistering innings of 184 in 1972 and perhaps the quirkiest, my classmate G.D.V (Donga) Perera facing up to the Royal skipper and 'Schoolboy Cricketer of the Year' Asitha Jayaweera, at the close of play, with S. Thomas' back to the wall with several wickets down, appealing for bad light, and when it was turned down by the umpire, to the derisive muttered comments of the bowler, hitting the next ball for a huge 6! I remember



Asitha, a true sportsman, applauding the Thomian grit. In this regard I was privileged to see the amazing stand, like Horatio by the bridge in ancient Rome, of Halangoda and Richards to save the Centenary match for S. Thomas' in 1979.

The Big Match itself was the climax of months of activity on and off the cricket field. The cricket season started at the end of the year in the Third Term when those who were eligible to play from the year's Royal Thomian formed the nucleus of the team, which started playing the then weaker 'outstation' teams like Richmond, Mahinda, Prince of Wales, St Sebastians and Zahira College. By the start of the 1<sup>st</sup> Term the team took shape facing stiffer competition playing St. Benedict's, Wesley, Ananda, Nalanda, St. Joseph's, Trinity, St. Peter's and finally Royal. Competition for the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 was intense. Cricketers had come up maturing through the ranks of U12, coached by Mr Manickam Arthputhuraj, U14 Mr George Ponniah, U16 the diminutive but redoubtable (and very vocal!) Lassie Abeywardena reaching the final teams 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 of Quentin Israel (better known as our 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby coach) and finally the elite First X1 coached by the scholastic and almost professorial Orville Abeynaike, who taught history, divinity and arithmetic. In this period the coaches had been the wards of their teams seemingly forever and kept an eager eye on the development of players as they went up the ranks, no doubt passing on information on rising stars to the coach of the next level. In those days, like the English county Yorkshire of late, the First X1 cricketers probably the best-known elite of the College, were almost all home grown. The only 'imports' I can remember were Balasingham, who in fact started off in College and came back from St. John's, Jaffna and the cricketing prodigy Duleep Mendis, who had precociously captained St. Sebastian's **before** coming to College, and went on to captain S. Thomas' famously scoring a power packed memorable 184 that year. As the players jockeyed for permanent spots in the team, the boys developed their favourites and, in a cricket, mad school this was seen as an unwarranted distraction to scholastic progress by the teachers. On one such occasion when instead of solving

riders in geometry, there was muted discussion of scores in a First X1 match (these were relayed by a succession of willing volunteers seemingly afflicted by irrepressible bladders being excused to 'go to the toilet'). These would race to the Big Clubs (where the matches were played) scoreboard and come back panting with the latest score, which would then filter round the class which had the intricacies of geometry, some distance below in importance from the cricket. The Rev L.G.B Fernando ("Laggabba") was an excellent and forceful maths teacher-he once proclaimed, irritated after such an interruption, that "if ever I became the Warden (some felt that he was indeed being groomed for the role) I would turn the big Club Grounds (the main cricket ground) into a massive maths complex". A shudder ran down the spines of us 16-year-olds at the prospect. L.G.B wasn't the only master annoyed by cricket as a distraction to our class work. Another iconic master, Mr Errol Fernando, one of Ceylon's leading chemistry teachers, proclaimed during the cricket season that his two pet dislikes were Law, as it "disproved the truth" and cricket "as it was such a waste of time"! The week before the Big Match was a steady build up to the Big Match weekend. Our prized Boys Tent tickets had been purchased (this tent was under the eagle eye of that strict disciplinarian Mr Mandawala, master in charge of cadetting). Basheer, the vendor who displayed his wares on De Saram Road, did a brisk sale in Big Match paraphernalia. The College flag was an essential item to wave from cars and buses to College. Flag waving flaunted your colours but also put one at risk of flags being snatched-or 'flicked' (a pure schoolboy term, not mentioned in the Oxford English Dictionary) as trophies by the opposing camp. The sound of rattles-ingenious hand-held wooden contraptions that made a terrific jarring noise when swung by the handles. Trucks were in evidence on the Galle Road and the main Colombo roads. These were large utility vehicles with an open-air trailer which were decorated loudly in school colours and a variety of plants e.g. banana trees and coconut leaves. The troupe of schoolboys and accompanying musicians-drummers and trumpeters, blaring out baila melodies and



popular Big Match anthems patrolled the streets drawing curious and amused glances from the general population, cheers or jeers from supporters of the rival schools and most importantly, the ire of the local constabulary as a threat to traffic. As alcohol was the main fuel of these noisy parading trucks many a parent would have bailed out their normally quiet and well-behaved son on a 'drunk and disorderly' charge from the local police station. Blithe spirits would invade girls schools creating as much disturbance as possible and the main objective, which brought huge bragging rights, was to ring the school bell drawing out delighted girls cheering their heroes, bringing a period to an untimely end, and a swarm of angry nuns and teachers sallying forth to shoo away the miscreants. The climax of all the weeks revelry would be a lengthy cycle parade ending up at the College cricket captain's (by now almost as revered as the Warden) house where they would be served refreshments for paying homage.

The match day in early March dawned usually fine and fair with great expectation and excitement in the air. We read the 'Big Match supplement' on the 'Daily News' with great interest, probably the only day in which one lay in wait for the paperman so that you read the papers first. Detailed descriptions were given of the Royal and S. Thomas' teams, focussing on the teams performances and the outstanding cricketers for that year. There usually was something on the history of this unique game of schoolboy cricket which has been played, uninterrupted from 1880, The iconic blue riband game Eton versus Harrow in England, on which the Royal-Thomian took inspiration for its inception started earlier but was interrupted during the two World Wars while the Royal-Thomian played on. I believe I disappointed a recent Warden of S. Thomas' by informing him that the Royal-Thomian was the **second** longest uninterrupted game of inter-school cricket in the world after a game in Adelaide, Australia between Prince Alfred College and St. Peter's College. However, despite this there is little comparison between the passion it arouses or the importance on the country's stage. The game in Adelaide is certainly highly

regarded and respected, watched by parents and well-wishers numbering less than perhaps 500 in total over three days, while the Royal-Thomian is covered on the national press with radio commentaries (there was no television during that time) draws in numbers exceeding those attending a test match in Colombo even interrupting Parliament in session when scores are secretly passed around as memos to the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition.

The arena, the field of dreams, where heroes were created in my College days was the Wanathamulla Oval. The drums we heard beating louder and louder as the match approached were our own beating hearts as we entered the sacred precinct each year. On the day of the match, it seemed that all roads led to the Oval - a never ending procession of flag waving noisy devotees, all dutifully dressed for the occasion in blue and black or blue and gold. While the boys were warriors

for their schools on the day, the girls also made a huge contribution parading in their carefully prepared dresses, nailing their colours to the mast. Parents arrived well prepared with baskets containing traditional match fare such as buttered and other sandwiches, rolls, patties and cutlets ensuring the faithful never went hungry or thirsty, by bringing in a surreptitious bottle or two of arrack. We entered our tents or enclosures-in our day, the Boys' Tent, the other enclosures were the Pavilion and the best known of all, the Mustang Tent, where the senior citizens of each College held court, increasingly lubricated, catching the pulse of the evolving game to the rhythm of their exclusive brass band competing with the blaring 'papara' bands around the ground. Chants and slogans filled the air with cries of R-O-Y-A-L punctuating the din above the incessant cacophony (this, for the uninitiated, was not the final practice of getting the school's spelling right but a war cry-a call to arms). The loudest noise was a collective mighty roar heard when a wicket fell or given out to greet a champion batsman striding out purposefully out of the Pavillion usually preceded by firecrackers emerging through a haze of smoke. In the midst of the noise the College Songs could be heard, sung with a



reverence of the faithful singing hymns on the Sabbath. The Tent and College prefects nattily dressed for the occasion in dazzling white with College ties and straw hats adorned with ribbons or gollywogs in school colours strutted around self-consciously, supposedly selling match souvenirs, directing people to their seats and keeping law and order, but in reality with the hope of impressing the girls.

Then, a hush descended on the packed ground and the two captains, resplendent in their striking blue, black and blue, blue, gold and blue blazers emerged from the pavilion for the toss with the umpires. A coin was tossed, a decision made, and another Battle of the Blues in the glorious tradition started in 1880 was underway. Could S. Thomas', a much smaller school, hold its own against its much larger giant rival, boasting of university like

numbers, in a longstanding enactment of the classic David vs. Goliath encounter. The X factor that the Thomians' depend on with backs to the wall in the past has been the legendary indomitable Thomian Spirit, which appears to have inspired Royal to an improbable win last year, showcasing the sheer excitement and unpredictability of this great match, which has been played in the best traditions of the great game of cricket, reflecting Life itself—perhaps best illustrated by the lines “when the Great Scorer comes to write against your name, it matters not whether you won or lost but how you played the game”.

*Dr Deepal Lecamwasam*  
*Adelaide,*  
*South Australia*

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## How Not to Be a Thomian

by Richard Simon

The Battle of the Blues is once more upon us, and the streets of Colombo are awash again with match-goers and celebrants decked out for carnival and making a glorious nuisance of themselves, while charter flights from abroad disgorge more revellers to add to the heaving throng. Cricketing talk and argument run high, days of old are fondly recalled, tall tales retold to make them even taller and many a glass is raised in toast to present company and absent friends. This is the time of year when Thomians and Royalists alike remember who they are and celebrate the grand institutional patrimony to which they are heirs. Most of the time, though not always, they remember that they are meant to be gentlemen, and conduct themselves accordingly.

This time last year, we Thomians – Old Thomians in particular – were faced with an unexpected test of our gentlemanly credentials. Proliferating online among various STC-related social-media groups, as pernicious as Covid itself, came an anonymous poison-pen letter headed ‘Rally Round the College Flag’. Many of my friends, mistaking my slight knowledge of Thomian history for familiarity with present-day Thomian

community politics, forwarded it to me, asking me whether the things said in it were true.

I read the letter. It contained several allegations against the Anglican Bishop of Colombo, one of which concerned the wardenship of S. Thomas' College (the Bishop is head of the Board of Governors, which appoints the warden). There is no need to repeat the allegations, still less to give any opinion about their veracity. I don't know and I don't want to know. Anonymous letters are the lowest, most contemptible form of libel and no-one, on principle, should give the slightest credence to them. When the British ruled Ceylon, they often deplored the shameful propensity of educated Lankans for writing anonymous letters; Warden Buck of reverend Thomian memory was particularly scornful of the practice, and once flogged a boy he caught writing such letters so hard that the offender's parents took him to court. The case was thrown out, the presiding magistrate finding that Buck had not ‘exceeded his authority as a schoolmaster in any way whatever,’ and that was the end of that.



Faced with allegations of bad faith, corruption and malfeasance involving their *alma mater* or members of its governing body, Thomians, young or old, are apt to take them seriously no matter what their source. Those unfamiliar with Thomian history tend to regard any talk of wrongdoing at College as a blemish upon a hitherto stainless reputation. Nothing bad, they appear to believe, ever happened in the great days of Miller or Stone or de Saram. Controversy and division among the Thomian community are to them a modern phenomenon, redolent of the morass of selfishness, corruption and fraud into which poor Mother Lanka has fallen in these latter days. We are shocked, disgusted, thrown into a moral panic, and end up giving such accusations more attention and credence than they deserve.

Those of us who have studied the history of the College know that controversy and faction are far from new to S. Thomas'. The experience of Warden Buck testifies to this, as do numerous other instances of ill-feeling and even litigation scattered across the years. The truth is, such misfortunes are unavoidable; no great, long-lasting public institution can hope to escape them. The first public scandal associated with the College occurred in 1851, when the school was barely six months old; and just to show that such mishaps are not confined to any one institution, that early public spat also involved the Colombo Academy, the future Royal College. You'll be able to read all about it in my history of STC and Sri Lanka, *Thomia* – along with some of the other disasters and scandals that have plagued the School by the Sea throughout her long history, though they have never seriously threatened her honour. *Thomia* should be out and available for purchase about the time you come to read this, and I hope I can interest you in getting hold of a copy.

Moving from the distant past to times more recent, most Thomians, young or old, have heard the oft-repeated claim that admissions to STC are rigged in favour of certain persons or groups. Mostly, such accusations arise from a poor understanding of the admissions process itself; yes, it is rigged – sort of – but openly, by means a 'points system' that awards extra credit to Anglicans and certain other groups. There is no corruption in this; it simply reflects the mission of the College, which is in part to serve the Church of Ceylon and its members, for some of whom special provision has to be made. This has been the case for as long as STC has existed. She was never meant, nor does she ever want, to be an exclusive school for rich men's sons – no matter that a few rich old boys, at least, have always wanted her to be just that. Indeed, another

common – and opposing – accusation is that rich boys are more likely to be admitted to S. Thomas' than poor ones. This charge is harder to deflect; it is, in fact, one of the perennial complaints against private education, one that is heard all over the world. Again, the pros and cons of the question – it is not as one-sided as some might think – are discussed in some detail in *Thomia*.

The controversy over admissions is an annual one, though minor. Only a few members of the Thomian community are involved in it, for only those with a son seeking admission that particular year have any direct interest in the question. Less regular, though far more virulent whenever it does surface, is factional rivalry over the appointment of wardens and the extension of their terms. As well as being the greatest secular honour that the Church of Ceylon has the power to confer on any of its members, the wardenship of STC is one of the most important appointments controlled by any non-governmental institution in Sri Lanka. Thomian influence on society is still considerable, so the appointment of the warden is a matter of interest not only to Thomians but also to many others, including politicians of all stripes. It is therefore subject to intense partisanship, aggressive lobbying and, sadly, occasional attempts by old boys and others to interfere covertly with and, if possible, affect the selection.

There is nothing new about this, either. Save for Samuel Anandanayagam, the unusual circumstances of whose appointment rendered it impervious to criticism, every warden since Reggie de Saram – even the blameless Charles Davidson – has been appointed over a cacophony of disagreement. Sometimes the chorus is muted, sometimes it is loud enough to endanger the chapel roof, but since the early 1980s it has grown ever more audacious and uncouth. John Selvaratnam was merely subject to gossip about his unpolished diction and his allegedly reckless driving. Later candidates fared much worse. Accusations of corruption against Neville de Alwis formed a bitter counterpoint to his long wardenship, rising to a periodic crescendo whenever his contract came up for renewal; at times the controversy even spilled over into the national press. And when de Alwis eventually retired – reputation, in spite of his detractors, still very much intact – his appointed successor proved so unpalatable to large sections of the Thomian community that they sued the Board of Governors, preventing the warden-elect from taking up his post for three years and finally having his appointment declared null and void.

Now, as Warden Billimoria relinquishes his post and the quest for a replacement continues, the gossips and poison-pen letter-writers have resumed their foul



work. I suppose this too, like scandal itself, cannot be avoided. In the Epilogue to *Thomia*, I wrote that:

Envious faction, discord and betrayal are as natural to some men as their mothers' milk. No educational influence, however high-minded, appears capable of quelling them; what cannot be cured must be endured.

Sadly, Thomians are not automatically exempt from these human frailties.

Though he himself has signalled his desire to move on, many old boys feel that Rev. Billimoria should continue in place. I used to be one of them – frankly, I hoped he would be a second Reggie de Saram, someone so closely associated with the College that he came to be regarded as an integral part of it. But as my research into the history of S. Thomas' progressed and I came to understand what a toll the office of warden exerts from its holder, I ceased to wish for a prolongation of Marc's trials. After so many years, he has surely won the right to an honourable retirement.

Meanwhile, however, the smear of assorted accusations, innuendoes and allegations against the Board of Governors and anyone rumoured to be a candidate for the wardenship is spreading once again. As usual, no real evidence of malfeasance is offered, just join-the-dots games and conspiracy theories. The eager reception awarded to such vicious, ill-founded gossip by some among us is a scandal in itself.

And so, as Thomians prepare to enjoy the Royal-Thomian and the spirit of fellowship that comes upon us at this season, many of us are being forced to deal with the ugly reality that a few among us prize their factional or personal interests above the values we all were taught in school and are meant to hold in common.

No doubt the alleged gentlemen who produce and circulate these anonymous screeds will argue that they are acting in the best interests of the College. In fact, their conduct offers the rest of us an object lesson in how not to be a Thomian. Let us take it, then, and ignore them.

Finally, a word to the fabricators of these accusations – if, that is, any of them happen to be reading this. An odd thing I discovered while researching *Thomia* is that, more often than not, when there is trouble, controversy or disgrace affecting the wardenship or the College administration, STC loses that year's Royal-Thomian. Fact. If you want the details, they're in my book.

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*Born in 1958, Richard Simon attended S. Thomas' Preparatory School, Kollupitiya through 1964-65 and S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia from 1966 to 1977. He has written and published several books on Sri Lankan history and culture*

*including, most recently, Ceylon Tea: The Trade that Made A Nation (2016, cta) and Sri Lanka: the Island from Above (2017, Barefoot). As a writer and editor, he counts nearly forty years in advertising, publishing and related fields, and has worked in India, Singapore and the UAE as well as (for the most part) in his own country.*

## *To All Old Thomians – We like to hear from you!!*

**We are reaching out to all Old Boys in Australia and Overseas** - If you do have an interesting anecdote about your days at College or some interesting tidbits about the after-school life of a fellow Thomian (or even a teacher) or just remember the good old days as they used to be, please, send in your articles, photos, letters, poems, stories, etc. to the Editor: **Upali Gooneratne**: [fgooneratne@iiec.org](mailto:fgooneratne@iiec.org).

### **Membership Register**

To all OBA Australia Members - It is vital that you advise us of changes to your contact details in order to ensure that this publication reaches you. Also, in order to maintain the membership records up to date, please contact the Membership Secretary of any changes (telephone number, address, deaths etc.). **Membership Secretary, PO Box 2337, Mt. Waverley, Victoria 3149. Email: [fgooneratne@iiec.org](mailto:fgooneratne@iiec.org)**



## SPORTING HEROES OF YESTERYEAR...



In this series, which commenced in the September 2023 edition, we aim to highlight the sporting achievements of old Thomians in the fifties and sixties era. So far, we have included the achievements of Rodney Ingleton, Maurice Fairweather, the two cousins – Rupert Ferdinands and Denis Ferdinands; and the Reid Brothers (Claud, Ronnie, Buddy, Barney and Tiny) and Anura Tennakoon, regarded as one of world cricket's technically most equipped batsmen during his time. In this edition, we feature a unique individual in the field of cricket, who has dedicated his life to the development of cricket in Sri Lanka; and a superb Athlete and Ruggerite who also has actively supported the Melbourne OBA for my decades.

### MICHAEL TISSERA



On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2024, one of our famous sons of S. Thomas', **Michael Tissera** celebrated his 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday with his close family and friends. Having achieved this milestone, there is no doubt that he will be "batting on", as he has done so often in the cricket field, to reach the magical three figures and beyond.

According to numerous articles, Michael could have been an all-time great had he be born a couple of decades late when Sri Lanka became a test playing nation. However, he was one of the architects that laid the foundation for the nation's entry to Test Cricket. He is fondly remembered by many players, spectators and writers alike as an elegant batsman, an inspirational leader; and the dignified manner in which he has conducted himself on and off the field. Michael is regarded as one of the finest gentlemen in Sri Lanka cricket.

As a boarder at College (Mount Lavinia), Micheal had the opportunity play numerous sports in addition to cricket and also representing the school and winning colours in Tennis, Athletics, Hockey and Rugby. He made his 1<sup>st</sup> XI cricket debut as a 14-year-old representing College for five years (1954-1958) and captaining the last two years (1957-1958). During a recent interview, Michael recalled how he got his first call up - *"I happened to be playing tennis on the Warden's court and I got a message to come and bowl to the 1<sup>st</sup> XI boys. I think that must have been Wednesday and they were supposed to play St. Benedict's over the weekend. So, I went for practice and bowled at them and at the end of the day they said come tomorrow. And so, I went the next day and had a knock, next thing I knew, I was playing on Friday. I didn't even have a pair of longs but fortunately was able to borrow a pair of longs from one of the dorm mates to wear for the game. That's how I played my first 1<sup>st</sup> XI game for College."*

Michael joined Nondescripts Cricket Club (NCC) after leaving College, and made rapid progress through the ranks. He was a part of the side that won the Sara Trophy in 1957-58 and 1960-61; over a decade later, he led them to the Saravanamuttu Trophy in 1969-70 and 1970-71. During this period, Michael had established himself as one of the foremost young talents in the country. He was named Caltex Sportsman of the Year in 1960 and Horlicks Sportsman of the Year in 1962.

Michael played a crucial role in Sri Lanka's rise in cricket in the 1960s and 1970s, and he had to remain content with 3 matches in the 1975 World Cup. He scored 52 against Australia, the only half-century of his ODI career. Michael captained the Ceylon team in 1965 to defeat the mighty Indian team in Ahmedabad. It was the first unofficial Test victory for a Ceylon team. Not only a captain but also a batsman, Michael scored two centuries in unofficial Tests - 122 against India and 120 against Pakistan,



both centuries scored in foreign countries. He had a massive leg-break, a deceptive googly, and a dead-straight flipper. There were several Thomians who played for the national side in 1960, namely, — *Trevelyan (TCT) Edward, Manoharan Ponniah, 'Buddy' Reid, Neil Chanmugam, Ian Pieris, and Michael Tissera.*

In a prestigious international career that lasted over 17 years, culminating at the end of the first Cricket World Cup in 1975, Michael scored 1,394 runs with two centuries and 8 half centuries. As a leg spinner he also took 27 wickets including a 5-wicket haul.

After hanging up his boots from first-class cricket Michael served Sri Lanka Cricket with great distinction as a National Manager and Chief Selector. Subsequently, he was invited by the former England Captain and MCC Chairman, Tony Lewis, to serve on the prestigious MCC World Cricket Committee. Michael later became Head of Cricket Committee in Sri Lanka Cricket, was appointed Chairman of Selectors in 2002; and managed both Sri Lanka A and Sri Lanka. He played a major role in getting Muttiah Muralitharan's action cleared. He has been vocal towards promotion of Provincial cricket to improve quality in the country. The Test series between West Indies and Sri Lanka is named the Sobers-Tissera Trophy, in honour of Michael and the greatest cricketer of all time, Sir Garfield Sobers.



*Michael with Sir Garfield Sobers*

In 1987, Michael was awarded the Sri Lankan honour '*Deshabandu*' for his meritorious service to cricket and in September 2018, he was one of 49 former Sri Lankan cricketers felicitated by Sri Lanka Cricket, to honour them for their services before Sri Lanka became a full member of the International Cricket Council (ICC). Recognitions so richly deserved.

His sporting achievements are rare. People associate him with cricket, but he actually, as indicated earlier, won school colours in four other sports at S. Thomas' — tennis, athletics, soccer and

swimming. Those who were privileged to witness his sporting exploits outside of cricket would no doubt testify to the grit he displayed and the highest standards of sportsmanship he maintained.

Professionally, he was a tea taster, initially as Tea Director at Brooke Bonds Ceylon Ltd and then as Senior Tea Director at Tea Tang (Pvt). He left Tea Tang when he was appointed as the Manager of the national cricket team, rejoining later as Chairman.

In a recent interview when asked who would he give credit and refining his technique and shaping him to a top cricketer, Micheal responded "*Lassie Abeywardena without a question! He was an all-round coach who gave me so much confidence. So much so that even when I was playing Club cricket and if I was having a bad run I would turn up at U16 practice, inform Lassie and bat right at the end, and he would put me right. Lassie is someone who read a lot about the game. He was a very keen student of the game. Took a lot of interest and he knew his stuff.*" He also indicated that his cricketing heroes were Keith Miller, Richie Benaud and Garfield Sobers.



Michaels' two sons, Graeme and Dirk, followed his father's footsteps by playing cricket for College in 1983/1984 and 1990/1992 respectively.

← *A family photo taken on Micheal's 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday.*

*Editor's Note: This article was compiled using extracts from several past publications. A special thank you to Ravi Rudra for sharing details his recent interview with Michael.*



## SELVA KANAGASABAI



**Herbert Selvaratnam Kanagasabai** (fondly known as “Selva”) may have been with St. John’s (Jaffna) and Trinity College in the earlier years but his association with S. Thomas’ from his mid-teens until now makes him one of the true sons of the School by the Sea. His dedication to our alma mater is epitomized by his continued support to the STC OBA in Melbourne spanning many decades and proudly serving as its President from 1997 to 1999 during which the OBA celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Selva’s sporting achievements during his time at STC and beyond, has been exceptional and worthy of praise and recognition. Since sustaining a shoulder injury in Rugby during his time in the tea plantation, Selva has maintained a strict routine to sustain high fitness levels throughout the years; and to celebrate his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday three years back he did a fund-raiser for research for Alzheimer’s Disease by doing 80 push-ups confirmed by a video recording, which was highlighted in the Thomiana (September 2023: Vol 26). His daily routine of 50 push-ups continues to this day.

Selva entered College in 1958 and spent his four years as a boarder in Copleston – Cloughton. He followed the footsteps of many renowned sportsmen transitioning the focus from studies to sports and excelling in Athletics and Rugby. The constant struggle to be injury-free from Rugby in order to perform well in Athletics was one of the many challenges he faced, with the respective coaches clashing frequently.

Selva’s athletics coach was non-other that Mr. Brookie D’Silva, who shielded his crop of Athletes from injuries. He also was Selva’s Zoology teacher and many times Selva was excused from his classes to go and rest in the Dorm before athletics events. In a recent tribute Selva stated *“Brookie taught, guided, encouraged, protected and trained generations of Thomians. A product of a bygone era, he was an icon admired and respected by countless students and athletes”*.

Selva represented STC at Senior Athletics (U19) for three years from 1958 – 1960, winning both College and Public-School Colours in all three years for his fine contribution to the 4x110 yards relay team. He also played 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby for three years, as a wing forward, representing Outstation Schools in 1960 and 1961 and winning colours in this sport as well.

Within two years of joining College, he was appointed as a School Prefect (1960 and 1961) – a rare feat by any standards and a reflection of his character and leadership qualities.

Selva’s father was a doctor of medicine and during the 1950s and 1960s served in several Upcountry hospitals in the tea growing districts such as Udapusellawa, Maskeliya and Dickoya, which brought him in contact with some planters who were patients, or friends of his parents. Their outdoor work, rugby, club life, attitudes and lifestyle made an impression on Selva



that steered him towards a career in plantation management. By the time Selva left STC at the end of 1961, his father had retired from government service and settled into private practice in Hatton, which became their hometown.

Selva's rugby career blossomed after leaving College. He attended rugby practices at Darrawella Club in nearby Dickoya, switching from his school position of wing forward to a centre three-quarter, on the advice of his captain, David Parker, who told him that his 10- stone frame would just not cut it in Club Rugby. He played for Dickoya right through that season as a centre three-quarter. During that year, he was selected for a career in plantation management for a prestigious British company and after a six-month period of training, appointed as an Assistant Superintendent on Waltrim Estate, Lindula, in the Dimbulla district. That marked the beginning of a rugby career that flourished, matured and ended over the next 12 years, as a player, captain (1966), coach (1970), Upcountry (1963 to 69) and Ceylon (1967 & 69).

In 1969, after representing (then) Ceylon against a visiting British team called the "Bosuns", playing in a friendly game he sustained a shoulder injury (broken clavicle) that needed a steel pin insertion. This injury and higher career responsibilities brought his playing days to a close; and he then went on to coach his Club the following year and also serve the Ceylon Rugby Football Union as a selector for Upcountry and the national side.

As for his working career, after managing a tea estate as a superintendent, he was invited to join the company's head office in Colombo, George Stewart & Co Ltd. Following the nationalisation of plantation companies, he migrated to Australia in 1976 and worked for the same company for 42 years, retiring as a senior executive in 2018, after 56 years in the workforce. In retirement, he spreads his time walking, gardening, reading and (needless to say), exercising!

His continued contribution and support for the STC OBA in Melbourne has been appreciated by many. After serving in the Executive Committee in the 1990s he moved up to the rank of President in 1997 serving for a customary period of two years.



*Super array of the truly professional role model gentlemen of yesteryear at a Capri dinner hosted on 21st August 2024 by Selva Kanagasabai.*

*L-R: Ken Murray, Malin Goonetilleke, Jayatissa Ratwatte, Jit Wanigasekera, S. Skandakumar, Mike de Alwis, Selva Kanagasabai, Michael Tissera, Anura Gunasekera, Hemannath Wickremesooriya, Dhyan Caldera, Asoka Herat, Devaka Wickremasuriya.*

**Editor's Note:** This article was compiled following an interview conducted by Rajan Hensman. A special thank you to Ravi Rudra for sharing details Selva's sporting achievements.



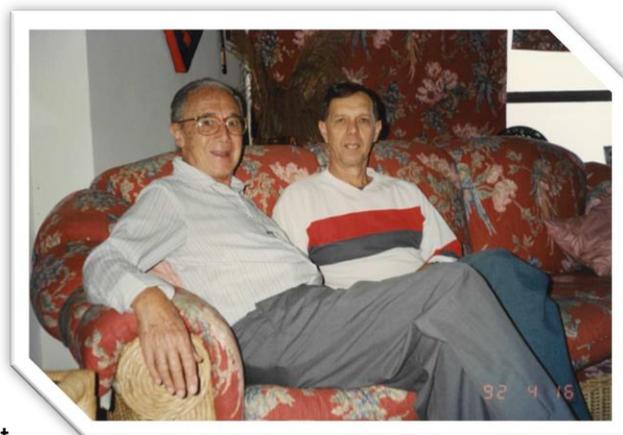
## MY ENCOUNTER WITH THE REVD. BOYER YIN CHAPLAIN EXTRAORDINARY

*The Revd. Christopher Karol Misso*

I joined St Thomas College, Mount Lavinia in January 1950 in the Lower Third Form (Mr David's Class). I was no star student and was occasionally sent home for not paying school fees! I had great difficulty with the 'pure Sinhala' being taught at the time. Much to my surprise I was promoted to the Upper Third Form (Mr B. E. W. Jeyhoratnam's Class). There I blossomed and moved into Upper Fourth where I obtained the special Prize for General Science and then a Prize for Geography in the Fifth Form. I sat for the GCE Ordinary Level in December 1955, gaining very good results in 6 subjects. Despite Sinhala, I was promoted to Col. Science B2. Here I had my first personal encounter with Fr Yin who was teaching an extra-curricular subject in Religion. I recall him lecturing in the Gospel of St John. On this occasion I had a small copy of this copy open in front of me but was obviously not paying much attention to what he was saying, as he characteristically walked and up down the class. He walked up to me, picked up my copy of St John and slapped me across the face. I was shocked as I did not associate such behaviour with the Chaplain!

I continued my studies in Col. Science B2 but failed in a second attempt to pass Sinhala in the GCE Ordinary Level. Disappointed, with no prospect of entering university, I made a hasty decision that I was going to leave college. Not known to me, my brother who was a priest and know to Fr. Yin had a word with him and I was summoned to see Fr. Yin one evening at 'Thalassa'. In fear and trembling, I climbed the stairs and Fr. Yin, whom I had never spoken to before, greeted me warmly. For the next half hour, we had a most cordial conversation in which he emphasised the importance of a university education and encouraged me to refrain from making a hasty decision about discontinuing my studies. I thanked him for his advice, but I made up my mind.

Years passed, and after 4 years work in a bank, I decided to enter Theological College. I gave as one of my referees The Revd. Boyer Yin. When interviewed the principal said I did not receive a favourable report from Fr Yin. I had no recollection of my previous encounters with Fr Yin. However, I was ordained and some years later, while working as a priest, I heard that Fr Yin had retired and returned to Singapore. My wife and I were planning a visit to my brother in Malaysia and had a stopover in Singapore. I contacted Fr. Yin's asking if he would meet us at the airport. There he was, recognised me at once and spent a couple of hours walking around Singapore, taking us out for lunch. The past was only a distant memory! We did meet again, this time on our visit to Hong Kong to take up an appointment in the Hong Kong Cathedral. Once again it was a most cordial meeting, this time with much more to share. Our final meeting was in Hong Kong towards the end of our tenure. We had kept in touch and Fr Yin knew we were in Hong Kong. He wrote and asked to stay with us for a couple of days. We were delighted to welcome him and offer him hospitality in our spacious high-rise apartment. It was a memorable occasion when we were able to share many stories from our past in a relaxed atmosphere. We knew when we said 'goodbye' that it would be my last encounter with a very special mentor and friend.





## MY FRIENDS – THE THOMIANS

*Perspective of a Royal Cricket Captain – Eardley Lieversz*

For a long time, I hated Thomians with a passion.



This phobia went back to a time when my father took to the Jayasekera home at Dehiwela as a child, in the late fifties. The young Jayasekeras teased me, heckled me, and frightened the life out of me. To me they typified Thomians – loud, brash

with little consideration for the feelings of sensitive souls like myself. In the late fifties a Thomian “flicked” my flag at the Oval. They couldn’t get any lower and intimidating. But they did it in 1965.

### **An unpopular umpire**

I made one mistake in giving David Ponniah out LBW in the under 16 Royal Thomian played at Mt Lavinia in August 1965. From then onwards in that game, every time I lifted my finger, even to give Dijen de Saram, stuck well out of his wicket like a German tank caught in the Russian bog, out, I was booed. I feared for my life and swore I would never return to this hostile environment.

Later that year, at the Oval, where the MCC team was playing Ceylon, I spotted Prabhoda Kariyawasam, the Thomian under 16 captain, pointing me out to an associate. He was no doubt alluding to my “hora” umpiring earlier in the year. I wanted to confront him, but his broad shoulders and height made me decide that discretion was the better part of valour.

### **My underdog mentality**

My off-field perception of Thomians was reinforced by their performances on the field. Except for 1960, until 1968, STC won the toss and batted first, with Royal under pressure from then on. I perceived Royal as the underdogs and the Thomians as those who showed us little mercy. They

had ferocious bowlers in Ferdinands and the two D’Silva brothers. The Thomians were large and brash. Royal’s cricketers were by contrast stylish and embodied an innocence which the Thomians lacked. They even thwarted us when we were at our strongest, in 1962, and then went onto humble us in 1964. Our stocks were so low that saving the 1965 became the moral equivalent of victory. It was frustrating to be a Royal supporter between 1962 and 1965 when a draw was the most that could be hoped for.

### **The man who cooked Royal**

And just when I thought that that Royal could turn the tables, a man called Ajit Jayasekera (AJ) restored the status quo. Yes, he came from that same horrible Jayasekera stock who intimidated me as a child, and which also produced an opening bat who took cockiness to new heights in 1966.

Many consider the Thomian second innings of 1967 to be a batting onslaught unparalleled in the history of the event. At the centre of it was opener AJ, whose carefree 31 in the first innings enabled St. Thomas’ to reach 50 in 30 minutes. AJ appeared to be contemptuous of every convention associated with sensible batting. And this man also had the gall to be “capping” our beloved Ruperty’s daughter. Was there no end to this man’s effrontery?

### **My Mustangs embarrassment**

When Jayasekera was in full flight there was nowhere to hide. As the Thomians piled on the runs I was scared that a high catch would come my way. I was spared this ordeal but let a ball through my legs in front of the Mustang tent. As I sheepishly stood my ground my cousin Brian collected the ball from the boundary and on his way past me and stated explicitly that I had to pick up my misfields from thereon. To add insult to injury an old Thomian, Hellings Ellawela, known to my father,



offered me a chair and kept poking the chair into my buttocks. I held the Thomians responsible for my misery and my dislike of them knew no bounds. The scary thing was that I had to survive two future Royal Thomians with AJ around. Big matches were supposed to be fun. Now I wondered what I had let myself into.



THE EMBODIMENT OF THOMIAN CALM & CONFIDENCE

### Seeing Thomian cricketers in a new light

After the 1967 Royal Thomian, I met AJ and other members of the Thomian team, many of whom were members of the “jeer” squad of 1965. And much to my surprise they were very nice blokes. It was no different to Buddy Holly meeting Elvis for the first time and commenting on how normal he was. AJ was modest and unassuming. He wasn't subhuman. He no doubt bled like everyone else. (I heard that he was inconsolable at his future father-in-law's funeral a few days later.)

I now felt privileged to associate with Thomians. They were so witty. They sang with gusto. They were such warm personalities. And I came to associate them with the ditties they sang. So, AJ became Rollicking Bill and Dijen became Sir Jasper. Of course, the danger in beginning to like those you once loathed is that you lose your rage and hunger for conquest.

Following the 1967 Royal-Thomian I rode my Rudge bike to wherever AJ was playing in the hope of cottoning on to some of AJ batting secrets. It did seem strange that a Royalist was hero worshipping a Thomian. People advised me that Ajit was unorthodox. But I was willing to dismay the purists to be able to hit like AJ.

### Thomian grit

AJ loomed large in Royal's thinking between 67 and 69. In 1968 Ranjit Gunasekera applied the screws on AJ with the same sort of urgency that the

Thomians approached Darrell Lieversz in 1962. Just before taking the field for the second Thomian innings in 1969, assistant coach Channa Gunasekera took me aside and urged me to go on the defensive without hesitation if things got out of control. At the back of his thinking was no doubt the possibility of AJ breaking loose and duplicating his 1967 efforts.

Anyhow, from 1968 our fortunes irrevocably turned. But this didn't diminish the newfound respect I had for the Thomians off the field. And on the field, I saw a new and laudable side to the Thomians – gallantry in adversity. (This facet of the Thomian character - true grit - was clearly on display in the 1979 and 2009 Royal-Thomians.)

### Putting things in perspective

History is written by the winners, and the achievements of the Thomian players of 1968 to 1969 are underestimated. Dennis Chanmugan was a mercurial character who would unhesitatingly risk defeat in pursuit of victory. In addition to Jayasekera and Hameed; Kariyawasam, Wijesooriya and de Saram produced innings' of character. De Saram, along with Kariyawasam enabled STC to avert the follow on in 1968 and de Saram would have been the match saving hero of 1969 if not for a miraculous catch. Kariyawasam's 37 in 1969 was a gem of an innings, initially breaking up an attacking field and then proceeding to penetrate a defensive field with effortless ease. Wijesooriya played two immaculately crafted knocks in the same game. Finally, with only three top line bowlers, including himself, Kariyawasam made the strong Royal batting line up struggle for runs through judicious bowling changes and tight field settings. If he had a second decent fast bowler at his disposal Royal's late rally may have been thwarted. For that matter, if Wijeratne had bowled with a total behind him, history may well have taken a different course and I probably wouldn't be writing this article. He only played in two games in 1969 and his form declined from thereon. Hence, very few people realise that he had a late in-swing that would have made Darrell Lieversz proud.

An American soldier observing German prisoners taken at the Falaise pocket in 1944 shuddered at the damage they could have caused under different circumstances. I felt the same about my Thomian opponents.



I have always felt nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for the cricketing acumen, intelligence and professionalism of the Thomian cricketers I played against. It has been a privilege to have been their adversary. And the friendships I have subsequently developed with many of them has been ennobling.

### The bloody Royal-Thomian

In addition to the incidents on the field, everyone has a favourite off the field incident. Prabhoda Kariyawasam fondly recalls an incident at his home which involved my father driving his stately Rover into a ditch in the process of leaving for home after visiting Mr Kariyawasam. Pat came the excuse, "This bloody Royal-Thomian", and while neighbours toiled to get the car out, he cheerfully had another drink with his host. The Royal-Thomian was cited in the same spirit in which it was played.

### The fiftieth anniversary reunion of 2019

When I initially contacted Kari about a possible reunion of the two teams of 1969, I was very apologetic. I told him that since the Royal-Thomian triggers painful memories, I would have understood if he preferred to stay out of it. But Kari unhesitatingly endorsed the event and gave it his full backing. That in a nutshell showcased the calibre of the man. My Thomian opponents won Royal hearts by cementing a victory of soul and spirit.

Kari went out of his way to make the event a success. His emotional investment in the event was even greater than mine. (I was pushed into organising the event.) He showed me how sportsmanship and gallantry is not something that is limited to the playing field. It continues to underwrite the game of life.

So, we met not as rivals, but as survivors. We have

survived not merely in the physical sense, but as friends. We haven't lost contact and haven't been indifferent to each other. The bond of friendship has grown over the years in a manner which couldn't have been envisaged when we approached each other warily, first as players, then as captains of our respective teams.

Thomian magnanimity of this sort has been a humbling experience for Royalists like me. It has made me a better person.

### A wonderful camaraderie

Well, that sums up the warm feelings I have towards Thomians. They define our identity as Royalists. To me they are crazy and lovable bunch of characters. They take silliness to great heights. They excel in taking the mickey out of themselves as much as Royalists.

I also admire the camaraderie that exists amongst Thomians that endures long after they have left school. A remark made by AJ to me a few years ago encapsulates that unique sense of loyalty that bonded the Thomians of my generation together.

### Sensitivity at the core

A few years back I was explaining to AJ of how he could have had us on the ropes at the end of the first day of the 1969 game. The Royal bowling held no fears for him. He was going great guns. Rather than try to loft every ball to the boundary he would have been better off rotating the strike and putting us under pressure. In brief, I accused him of not playing sensibly and throwing away an opportunity to have us on the ropes. Rather than argue with me he replied in poignant manner – "My biggest regret is that I let down the best friend I ever had". In other words, he rued the hurt he caused his captain. That sums up the Thomian to me. Sensitive and selfless. They don't come any better.

### Eardley Liewersz

*"Eardley is the oldest living winning Royal-Thomian captain. Eardley is a voracious writer, reader and an amateur historian. He is currently involved in seven writing projects which are at varying stages of gestation. When he isn't reading or writing, Eardley cycles and dances. He has done eight cycle tours, seven of them unsupported, across Oz, and hasn't finished yet. He and his wife Karen are passionate social dancers, with rock 'n' roll and jive being their specialities."*





## MR GEORGE THAMBITHURAI – A TRIBUTE

Mr. George Gnanendiran Thambithurai a much-loved teacher at St Thomas' College Mt Lavinia passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November in Toronto Canada.

Mr. Thambithurai had his early education at St John's College Jaffna and thereafter completed his undergraduate degree at Madras Christian College in India. Mr. Thambithurai joined the teaching staff of St Thomas' College Mt Lavinia in 1962. He was also the House Master for Copplestone Cloughton house for most of his time at St Thomas'. He left College in 1980 to join Teachers College Nigeria where he taught for 7 years. In 1987 he migrated to Canada to join his extended family. He worked at the Royal Bank of Canada as a Trust officer before retirement. Incidentally, Mr. Thambithurai also first met his future wife Swarna Navaratnam at College where she was a teacher in the Lower School.

On hearing of his passing a few fellow students of Mr. Thambithurai have reminisced with me about his deep affection for and loyalty to St Thomas' and that he cherished every one of his relationships with both staff and students. Many have recalled that he often referred to his students affectionately as 'his boys' and followed their careers eagerly when possible. I had a personal experience of this when I visited Toronto in 1999. While leaving a Sri Lankan carol service late one cold winter evening I heard my name called out from afar. I turned to see Mr. Thambithurai walking briskly towards me and he appeared delighted to see me and

greeted me with a firm handshake. I was so touched that he recognized me as I had not seen him for over thirty years and I was not noted in College for any achievements whatsoever. When I asked him how he remembered me after such a long time he told me that he never forgot any of 'his boys' and thought about them from time to time. I had to give him an extensive report on how I had got on with life after leaving school. He mentioned to me that he kept in touch with all news associated with his beloved St Thomas' and attended OBA functions in Toronto whenever he could.

I last met Mr. Thambithurai about 6 years ago when he visited Melbourne to visit family and some of his old students hosted him to dinner at the, Walawwa' Sri Lankan restaurant. He was still the Mr. Thambithurai of old, alert as ever and very keen to find out how each of us was getting on in life. He appeared to thoroughly enjoy reminiscing about the 'good old days' at College. I was honoured to be called upon to speak on that occasion and to share my thoughts about Mr. Thambithurai. I will always remember him with affection and gratitude.

Rest in Peace Dear Sir.

*Romesh Nagarajah (St Thomas' College Mt Lavinia 1957-1968). Professor Emeritus at Swinburne University of Technology.*





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	Mandula Fonseka	0403 468 048	mandula007@gmail.com

### *New Members of the OBA in 2024/25*

Name	Branch	Period	Name	Branch	Period
Gerard ABEYSENA	Mt. Lavinia	1971-1976	Vidura MEEMEDUMA	Mt. Lavinia	
Rohan LATHAM	Prep/Mount	1964-1970	Rohan EDWARD	Mt. Lavinia	1973 - 1983
Dinesh RAJAYAH	Mt. Lavinia		Shehan DHANAPALA	Mt. Lavinia	
MNK DE SILVA	Mt. Lavinia		Trevin FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia	
Mohan ARIARATNAM	Mt. Lavinia	1955 - 1965	Gihan FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia	1985 - 2000
Adrain FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia		Romesh PARANAVITHANA	Mt. Lavinia	
Randall JOSEPH	Mt. Lavinia		Palitha KARUNARATNE	Mt. Lavinia	
Yohan FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia	1983 - 1996	Shantha DE SILVA	Mt. Lavinia	1978 - 1982
Kevin MARTIN	Prep	1963 - 1971			



# Calendar of Events - 2025

## February

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>**

### ROYAL – THOMIAN CRICKET MATCHES & FAMILY DAY

9.30 am onwards

Greaves Reserve

Bennet Street, Dandenong, Dandenong Showgrounds

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup>**

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

6.30pm

Notting Hill Community Centre

386, Ferntree Gully Road, Notting Hill, 3168

## May

**Saturday**

### MEMBERS LUNCH

12.00 noon

Venue: To be confirmed

## July

**Saturday**

### THOMIAN BALL - 2025

6.30pm

Venue: To be Confirmed

## August

**Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>**

### TRANSFIGURATION SERVICE

10.00 am

Venue: To be confirmed

## October

**Saturday**

### THOMIAN FAMILY NIGHT

7.00pm

Venue: To be confirmed

## November

**Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>**

### MELBOURNE CUP SWEEP

2.00pm

## December

**Saturday**

### FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

6.00 pm

Venue: To be confirmed



## IN MEMORIAM



*They remain in our memories forever*



**Rizvi Suhaib:** Rizvi was from the Class of 89 at STCML. He is best remembered for captaining the STC Rugby team that remained unbeaten in 1989, the first time College won every trophy encounter, which includes the traditional trophies, Schools League and President's Trophy at the Knockout Finals under his leadership. He is also the youngest ever to play for the College 1st XV team, for 5 years, and he had the distinction of playing for the National team while still being a schoolboy. Rizvi also captained the Sri Lanka U20 in 1989 that toured Thailand. He also played for the CR and FC and later moving to Kandy Sports Club



**Kumara Welgama,** an Old Boy of both S. Thomas' Preparatory School and S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia. He was an influential figure in politics having served as the Minister of Transport, Energy and Power, and Industrial Development in his time as a Member of Parliament from the Kalutara District till 2019.



**Capt. Chirananda ("Chira") Fernando:** Chira was the second son of Mrs Merlyn Fernando, a long-standing Teacher at College in the 1950s and 1960s. Trained at the elite RAF College at Cranwell, UK, Chira rose to the rank of Squadron Leader and opted for retirement to pursue a career in Commercial Aviation. He was a highly respected figure in Sri Lankan aviation. With a distinguished career that spanned decades, Captain Chira made significant contributions to the growth and development of aviation in Sri Lanka. His younger brother GAF was also a senior commercial pilot.



**Mr. George Thambithurai:** Mr. Thambithurai was a dedicated teacher at S. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia, from 1962 to 1980, where he deeply valued his relationships with colleagues and students, fondly referring to the latter as "his boys." He served as the House Master of Copleston Claughton and managed the College Library, located opposite the Art Room. It was in this setting that he met Swarna, the school's art teacher; who was his wife for 56 years. He passed away in Canada and the funeral was held on November 22, 2024:

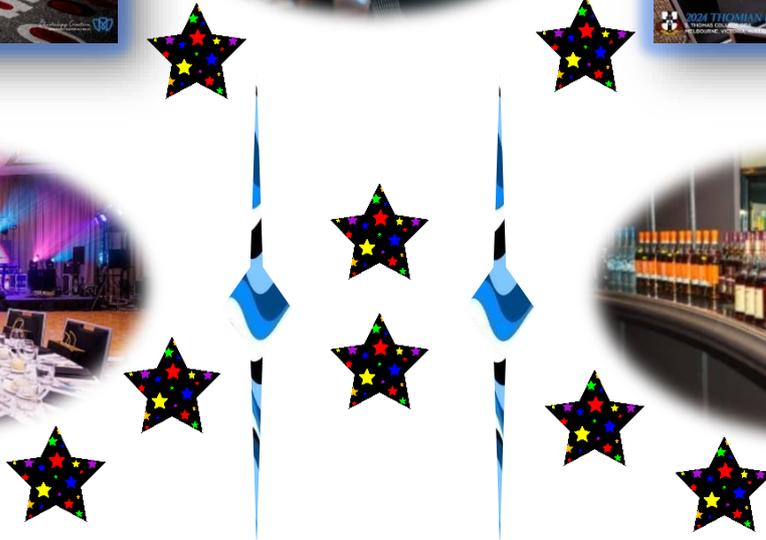


**Mr. Channa Asela De Silva,** old boy, Headmaster, Teacher and former member of the Board of Governors of STC of S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia, passed away on Saturday 7th December 2024. His deep love for his alma mater was evident in the remarkable decision to name both his sons with the initials "STC," a lasting tribute to S. Thomas' College. His commitment to education extended far beyond Thomians. He provided tuition to countless students from various schools across Colombo, earning admiration not only as a master at STC but as an educator deeply respected across the city.

**Esto Perpetua**



# PHOTO GALLERY: THOMIAN BALL 2024



**PHOTO GALLERY: THOMIAN BALL 2024**



**PHOTO GALLERY: CAROL SERVICE (14<sup>TH</sup> December 2024)**





**S. Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia Sri Lanka OBA  
Australian Branch Inc.**

ABN 18 114 799 661  
PO Box 2337, Mount Waverley, Victoria 3149  
[www.stcobaust.org.au](http://www.stcobaust.org.au)

**1 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

I desire to become a member of S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka O.B.A. Australian Branch Inc. On admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association

<b>Surname</b>			
<b>Given Names</b>			
<b>Date of Birth</b>			
<b>Address (Optional)</b>			
	<b>State</b>		<b>Postcode</b>
<b>Contact Details</b>			
<b>Email</b>			
<b>College Branch Attended</b>		<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
<b>Class Group</b>			

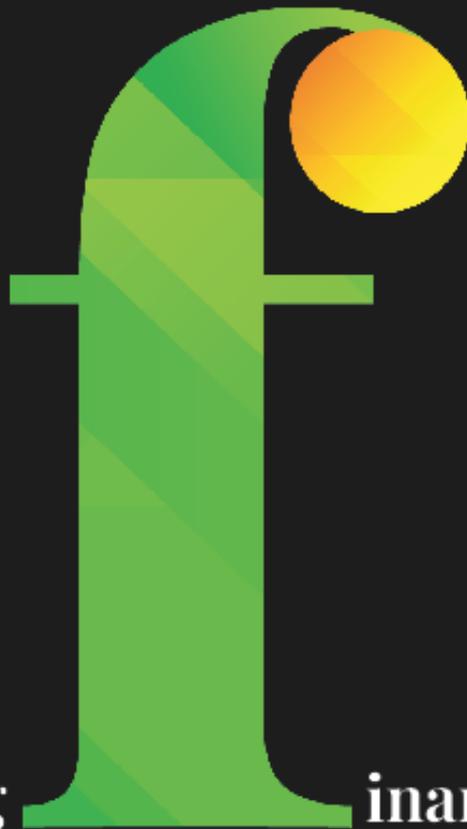
Signature of Applicant: ..... Date: ...../...../.....

**2 PAYMENT DETAILS**

<b>Membership Fees</b>	Regulars: <b>\$25.00</b> Concessional (Full-Time Students & Pensioners): <b>\$10.00</b>
<b>Cash/cheque/MO</b>	\$..... enclosed (in favour of S Thomas College OBA)
<b>Bank Transfer</b>	I have credited <b>STCOBA's</b> account online at Commonwealth Bank Australia, Mount Waverley Branch  <b>BSB: 063-151</b> <b>Account No: 1002-9468</b>  in the sum of \$_____ having recorded my name as remitter for identification purposes.

<b>Postal Address and Enquiries</b>	<b>Membership Secretary</b> <b>PO Box 2337, Mount Waverley Vic 3149</b> Enquiries: Upali Gooneratne Email: <a href="mailto:fgooneratne@iiec.org">fgooneratne@iiec.org</a> Tel: <b>0449024294</b>	<b>Executive Committee Use Only</b>	
		Proposer Name	
		Seconder Name	
		Application Approved	
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