THOMIANA

September 2024, Volume 27 Issue 3

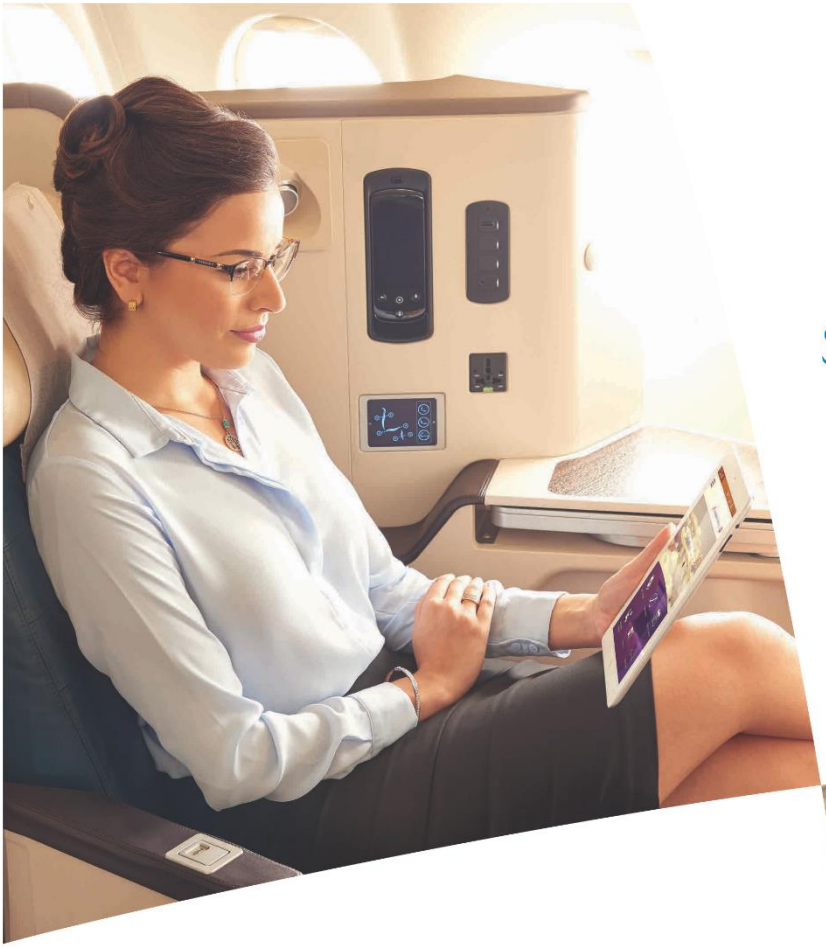
Publication of S. Thomas' College Old Boys Association, Australia Branch Inc.
PO Box 2337. Mt. Waverley, Victoria 3149, Australia

PROPOSED INTERIOR MODIFICATION FOR THE LOWER SCHOOL LIBRARY AT S, THOMAS' COLLEGE, MT. LAVINIA

THE MOST AMBITIOUS PROJECT UNDERTAKEN BY THE STC OBA MELBOURNE

Responding to a request from the current Warden, Revd. Marc Billimoria, the OBA undertook to extensively renovate the Lower School Library. This initiative, which originated a few years back, was hampered with the Covid pandemic; and now scheduled to be fast-tracked with a contract to be confirmed by the end of this year.

Project details are included in this edition



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

S. Thomas' College is an Anglican, Government approved, private, fee-levying 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 Thomians,

I hope this message finds you well.

As we bid farewell to the winter chill and embrace the warmth of spring, we eagerly anticipate an eventful period of the year with the Thomian Ball scheduled for 12th October 2024 being the main attraction. This together with the Melbourne Cup Draw and the annual Carol Service will see off an eventful year.

Based on the high demand for tickets last year and having to disappoint some of the late comers, we decided to relocate the Thomian Dance to a larger venue. The Pullman on Albert Park, where we had many previous Dances was considered to meet our requirements with the ability to cater for around 450 guests. As always, our dedicated Dance Committee members have spared no effort to ensure that our guests have a memorable experience, complete with entertainment for all age groups, delectable cuisine, and a selection of the finest beverages. The early bird offer, which ended on 31 August 2024, has resulted in nearly 75% of the tickets being sold. I am happy to share with you my experience using the services of our main sponsor of the Annual Thomian Ball, *Tomorrow Finance Services*. I was able to save over $1,500 a month by refinancing mortgage loans and would encourage our readers to try their services. It was a pleasurable experience with my account being managed by a Thomian.

Additionally, we will once again be running the Melbourne Cup Draw, and the details of how to participate will be shared in early October. If you're eager to learn more, please don't hesitate to reach out to any Committee Member or I, and we will be happy to keep you updated.

The Dance and the Melbourne Cup are of special significance this year for us to meet an obligation made to the Warden to renovate the Lower School Library and we hope to have the contract finalised early next year prior to the end of his tenure. All proceeds from these two events would be channelled to this project. Details of this project is included in this publication and we would appreciate any support from our members and well-wishers.

As we approach the festive season in December, our annual Carol Service will take place on December 14, 2024. At the time of writing the venue has not been finalised. We eagerly await your participation in this final event of the year, and the venue and commencement time will be communicated in due course.

In conclusion, I extend my warmest wishes to you and your families for a joyful spring and summer ahead. I look forward to seeing you at the Thomian Ball and the Carol Service, where we can continue to celebrate our cherished traditions and create lasting memories together.

Esto Perpetua

Sincerely

Saman Liyanage

rawpixel

EDITORIAL

"Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions"

At last, it appears that Spring is in the air after the arduous Winter months that was prevalent in Melbourne this year. The OBA activities since the last issue of the Thomiana was restricted to only two events – Family Night and the Transfiguration Service. However, our Dance Committee has been hyperactive tying up the loose ends for our major function of the year – Thomian Dance 2024 scheduled for 12th October.

In order to cater for the younger members, we reintroduced the Family Night in this year's calendar. The event held at the Jan Wison Community Centre on 25th May was attended by a sell-out crowd. The event attracted a significant number of children with special activities and food especially catered for them. Hopefully, this would be an annual feature of the OBA.

The traditional Transfiguration Service was held on a Saturday (3 August) reverting to our old venue (St. Adian's Anglican Church, Noble Park) after experimenting with a new location last year. (Berwick Anglican Church) The attendance was significantly better that last year; and the service conducted by an Old Trinitian, Rev. Sathi Anthony. Our appreciation to Rayesh and Lalindra of the Ex-Co for organising the event and to our "master-chef" Chris Varney for the traditional Sri Lankan breakfast. We believe that the consideration of whether the service should be held on a Saturday or Sunday, has been resolved based on the attendance this year.

The preparations for the Thomian Dance are in full swing. Because of the limitations in the last year's venue (Pullman on the Park) we have reverted back to the Pullman Melbourne – Albert Park that could accommodate a larger crowd. This was our original venue when we moved away from the Moorabbin Town Hall. The Dance Committee comprising of current and past Ex-Co members are ensuring that the high standards set previously are maintained. The format is very similar to our very successful event last year. Advance ticket reservations are surprisingly high, with most taking advantage of the early-bird special.

The other annual fundraising event – Melbourne Cup Draw is scheduled for the first Tuesday in November (5th), only 3 weeks after the Thomian Dance. Considering that there is not much planning required, it is expected that we would meet our target in the Cup Draw.

The Dance and the Melbourne Cup draw is of special significance this year considering our commitment for upgrading the Lower School Library at Mt. Lavinia. There is also added pressure from the Warden for this project to be contracted before he ends his tenure in January 2025. Considering, the enormity of the challenge of raising around $17,000, the intention is, in addition to channelling the proceeds of the two events, to make a special appeal to our membership. The details of the fundraiser are given in this issue and request our readers to consider supporting the cause.

The last event for this year will be the Carol Service and Christmas Party tentatively scheduled for the second Saturday in December. The venue is yet to be finalised.

It is sad to note the demise of Sriyan Jayasinghe, the son of our former teacher Late D.S Jayasinghe, in August. Sriyan who has been a regular visitor to Melbourne, dedicated his life to the school, especially to the OBA. He established various Groups and used them to to keep the Old Boys informed of the developments at College. We convey our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

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.

ESTO PERPETUA

Upali Gooneratne
Editor

OBA News

Thomian Family Night – 25th May 2024

This event, re-introduced to the OBA calendar, proved to be an extraordinary success catering virtually to a full house with the added feature of around 30 kids gracing the occasion. The Jan Wilson Community Centre had the ideal facilities to care for the kids in a safe environment.

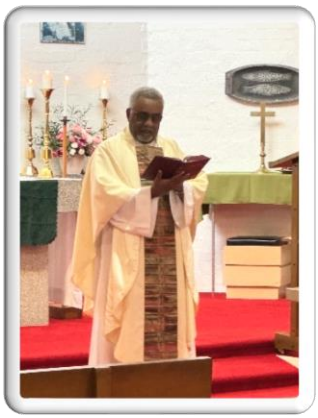
The re-configured family orientated event included Kid's activities, sumptuous dinner & drinks; and live music for dancing and fellowship. A Raffle was conducted in conjunction with the event and included attractive prizes for both adults and kids.

The "Kids Corner" was a tremendous hit, enabling the parents to enjoy the evening knowing their young ones were in safe hands. Kids were entertained with a series of movies, face painting and yummy food.

The event proceeds have been earmarked for the Lower School Library Project.

Transfiguration Service – 3rd August 2024

This year's Transfiguration Service was held once again at the St. Aidan's Anglican Church in Noble Park, Victoria on Saturday 3rd August 2024. Last year's venue (Berwick Anglican Church) was changed due to low attendance primarily due to its location. This year's attendance was around 60.



The service was conducted by Rev. Sathi Anthony (an old Trinitian) supported by Mrs Heather Soertsz (Organist) and the STCOBA Choir.

After singing of the College Song, the attendees, were treated to a sumptuous Sri Lankan style breakfast, including milk rice ("kiri-bath"), chicken curry, fish curry, seeni-sambol and katta sambol cooked by our very own Master Chef, Chris Varney (Vice President and former President of the OBA).

Our appreciation to all those who supported the event.

News from Sri Lanka

Passing of a Thomian Legend - Sriyan Jayasekera

We are saddened to inform the demise of Sriyan Jayasekara.

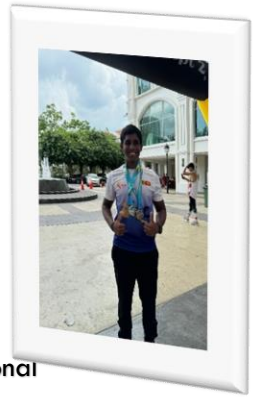
He was an active former member of the OBA Executive Committee, and was instrumental in the establishment of various Fraternity Groups, including the DSA Group, and the Past Prefects Group. He was a true Thomian, who gave his utmost to College.

This is the Facebook Post of Warden Marc Billimoria: The passing of a Thomian legend! Sriyan Jayasekera was a Thomian par excellence who epitomized loyalty, integrity and many other values that Thomians hold dear. I was fortunate to have had his support, solidarity and wise counsel throughout my tenure as Warden and it was only this year that he withdrew from activity on behalf of the College due to his ill health. I shall miss him dearly. Here was a Caesar among Thomians - "whence cometh such another?"

The fraternity sends its deepest condolences to his family and friends. May he rest in peace

Thomian Oarsman - Denver Deheragoda Shines at Asia Rowing Championships in Malaysia

Current Thomian Oarsman, 15-year-old Denver Deheragoda, son of former Thomian Oarsman Dinesh Deheragoda was awarded his National Rowing Colours by the ARASL recently. Denver was selected to represent Sri Lanka at the 2024 Asian Rowing Indoor Championship in Malaysia and the 2024 Asian U19 Rowing Championship in China.



At the Asian Indoor Rowing Championships held in Malaysia, Denver Deheragoda won two Gold medals - U17 Men's pair and U17 4x500m relay and a Silver medal - U17 mixed double. This is the first time a Thomian rower has won medals at an international event whilst still in school.

Our Congratulations! to Denver on this tremendous achievement.

Rear Admiral Kanchana Banagoda – New Chief of Staff of the Sri Lankan Navy

Rear Admiral Kanchana Banagoda, an Alumnus of S. Thomas' College, Bandarawela, was recently appointed as the Chief of Staff of the Sri Lanka Navy.

We extend our sincere Congratulations! and wish him every success as he Leads with distinction and unwavering dedication.

Forthcoming Events

Thomian Ball 2024

Melbourne Cup Draw – 5 November 2024

Tickets per Draw: 24
Cost of Ticket: $ 25

Prizes:
1st Prize: $ 150
2nd Prize: $ 75
3rd Prize: $ 50

This popular fundraising event which was first organized in 2020 is back in the OBA Calendar of Events. This is the last opportunity this year to raise much needed funds to support our Branch schools and local charities. The Melbourne Cup race will be on Tuesday 5th November 2024 and will follow the same format as previous years.

Participation is open to all Old Boys, families and friends. If you are interested in supporting the event, please contact:

Upali Gooneratne Tel: 0449 024 294 Email: fgooneratne@iiec.org

Milestone Birthday Celebrations

ALGIE - A Centurion in the Making!!

By the grace of God, Algie Stonehewer will be celebrating his 100th Birthday on 7th October 2024, with his close family and friends. After attending a boarding school in Badulla in his early years, Algie joined STC Mount Lavinia for a period of 8 years (1934 – 1942). His father being a Tea Planter in the Uva Province (Kahagalla Estate), Algie was in the boarding (Claughton House) during his entire time at College. As with most boarders, sport normally takes prominence over studies and Algie was no exception. He played a multitude of sports – including soccer, hockey, athletics, swimming, boxing and fives; and captained the Hockey team and joint-captain of Athletics. On the academic side, unsurprisingly his favourite subjects were English Language and English Literature. He recollected with gratitude Canon R.S. De Saram who was the Warden during his time.

As with most schoolboys (and Masters), Algie too had a unique nickname. He was reluctant to reveal this as, according to him, it would be unfit for publication!! Yes… your guess is good as mine!! Some of his contemporaries that came to his mind were Sam Elapata, Upali Katugaha, E.D. Cotelingam and Oscar Wijesinghe.

After leaving College, he joined the Army for 4 years and then moved to the Police, in the MI-5 unit, where he served for 9 years and had the distinction of being the Royal Bodyguard during the visit of Queen Elizabeth to Ceylon in 1954. He later joined the Ceylon Tobacco Company in Kandy; and was actively involved with the Kandy Sports Club where he served as Secretary in the 1960s till, he migrated to Australia.

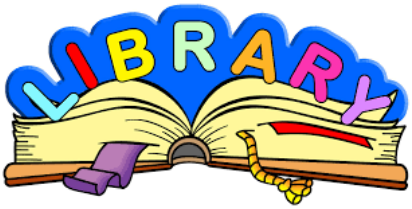
Algie married his childhood sweetheart, Heather, an Old Girl from our sister school (Bishops College), in 1951 with the marriage ceremony conducted by Canon De Saram at St. Michaels' Church, Polwatte. Followed by a reception at the Galle Face Hotel. Algie and Heather were renowned for their ballroom dancing skills and won several prizes in Sri Lanka.

The Stonehewer family (Algie, wife Heather and daughters Jennifer and Gillian) migrated to Australia in 1967 and called Melbourne their new home Down Under. After serving for 1 year with the Victorian Police, he worked at the State Electricity Commission (SEC) until his retirement in 1990.

Algie, with a group of other old Thomians, first initiated the idea of the establishment of an OBA in Australia, which finally came to fruition in 1972. Algie was an active member of the OBA for many decades supporting its numerous activities. He has also been involved the activities of the Freemasons, ACF and the 80 Club.

Algie and Heather now spend their retirement at their family home in Glen Waverley supported by their two daughters, six grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Editor's note: *This article was written following an interview by two OBA members – Arasu Saravanamuttu and Upali Gooneratne. We wish to express our appreciation to Gillian and Richard Emerson for initiating this visit.*



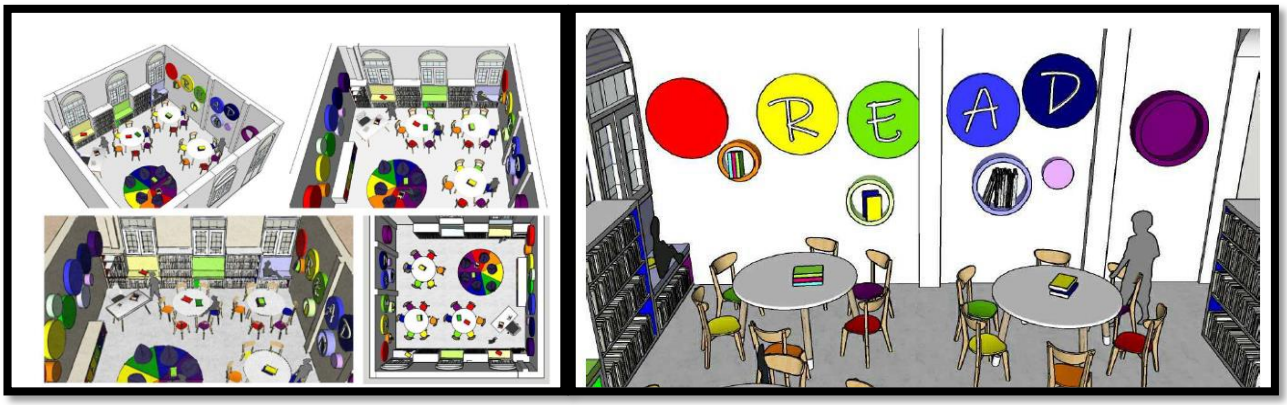
Lower School Library Upgrade Project

This project originated before Covid following a visit to the College (Mt. Lavinia) by a member of the Executive Committee of the OBA; when the Warden expressed concern about the current library facilities in the Lower School and sought assistance in upgrading the library and the quality of the contents (books, computers etc.). Since then, it has been our steadfast intention to initiate a substantial upgrade in both aspects. Unfortunately, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impeded the fundraising capacities of the Melbourne OBA. The Lower School Library Project holds immense significance for our Thomian community in Melbourne. The library's current state does not reflect the excellence we associate with our College. We aim to transform this space into a vibrant hub of knowledge and inspiration. Recently, the Warden emphasized its importance during his visit to Melbourne in May 2024 and expressed his desire to see the contracts awarded before his tenure concludes in January 2025.

The preliminary work on the project has already been completed. To this end, we have been fortunate to receive assistance from several old boys in Sri Lanka. Their tireless efforts have resulted in productive engagements with the school authorities, including the Warden and Sub Warden, to conceptualise an architectural plan. Additionally, they have successfully obtained three competitive builder quotes. Given the current exchange rate, the estimates range between $16,500 and $18,800. The current state of the library and the proposed conceptual design is shown in the photos below.

Current Status of Library

Conceptual Drawings for the Upgrade



How You Can Make a Difference:

Financial Requirement: We need to raise $15,000 to kick-start the project promptly. Your generous donation will directly impact the library's renovation and enhance its resources.

Block Contributions: Consider contributing in blocks of $100 or multiples thereof (e.g., 1 block = $100, 2 blocks = $200, and so on). Every contribution counts, and together, we can achieve our goal.

Spread the Word: Share this appeal with fellow alumni, friends, and family who share our passion for education and community development.

The OBA has earmarked two events this year, namely Thomian Dance 2024 (12th October 2024) and the Melbourne Cup Draw (5th November 2024), where the net proceeds will be channelled to this Project.

The preferred payment method is Bank Transfer. OBA Bank Account details are as follows:

Bank: Commonwealth Bank of Australia
BSB: 063 -151
Account: 1002 9468
Reference: Donor's Name – Library Project

Alternately, please forward a a cheque in favour of "S. Thomas' College Old Boys Association" The mailing address is: P O Box 2337, Mt. Waverley VIC 3149

Your support will not only honour Warden's legacy but also empower future generations of students. Please join us in this transformative endeavour. Together, we can create a library that inspires curiosity and fosters learning, among the Lower School students.

Thank you for your generosity and dedication to our alma mater.

For more information, contact:
Saman Liyanage – Mob:0407 358 415, email: saman.a.liyanage@outlook.com

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Forthcoming Event

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

CAROL SERVICE

DATE: Saturday 14th December 2024
VENUE: To be Confirmed

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Tribute to a Great Master Unlike Any Other

To Sir, with Love –

Ishan De Lanerolle

'The hymns have faded, the prayers are said,
The chapel echoes with the silence of the dead.
Yet in our hearts, his voice remains,
A symphony of guidance through joy and pains.'

In the early 2000s, Sir began experiencing persistent and unusual pains—one day his eye, the next his toe, then his hand and the list goes on. We took him to several doctors who initially treated him for psychological issues. However, I knew this was not in his mind. Finally, a full health check at Apollo Hospital (now Lanka Hospital) revealed a tumor the size of a tennis ball in the middle of his spine. Sir needed a rare and complex surgery. An appeal went out, and within three days, 1.5 million rupees poured into the STC account.

Securing the appointment with Dr. Sunil Perera, a renowned neurosurgeon, was another story. With Nimantha De Alwis's help, we managed to get an appointment for 9 PM. Sir told us to pick him up from Kanatta (Borella Cemetery). I waited at Asiri Surgical from 6 PM, while Rohan searched for him in Kanatta, but Sir was nowhere to be found. Eventually, Sir contacted me via a post office phone the next day, and we met at 4 PM the same day, keeping him safe and determined to meet the doctor until the 12:15 AM the following day! The surgery went well, and Sir spent almost three months in a nursing home in Panadura for critical aftercare. This marked the unofficial start of the De Lanerolle's involvement in Sir's care.

Rohan and I never had the privilege many Thomians had of experiencing Sir's teachings from a young age. Rohan joined College from Prep School after his O Levels, benefiting from Sir's guidance for only three years. I joined College in the third term of Form V and was in the choir only for four years, commencing in Upper VI. Realizing what I had missed in terms of flowing handwriting, impeccable English, and comprehensive music theory. I still remember almost the entire class scoring around 20 to 40 out of 100 in music exams which were known for their complexity. Scoring 40 in Sir's paper was a guarantee of a distinction in the local O Levels. Contrary to what many think, neither of us were choir leaders. The choir had a very clear line of seniority. There was a register, and the names were in that order and moved up year on year. Once again, this method taught humility in service. You could be the most celebrated singer, but in the choir, you were what you were in the order of service.

In College, Sir epitomized S. Thomas' College. Discipline, punctuality, integrity, commitment, planning, organization, devotion, and steadfastness are just a few of the qualities that defined him and shaped our lives. Sir always stood his ground, whether facing the Warden, priests, or the Bishop. He was never late unless he intended some 'drama'. His devotion meant he would drag himself to the classroom even when sick. He meticulously planned events, with choristers knowing he had both rain and no-rain plans for the carol service.

Material things never mattered to Sir. The late Vinodh Senadeera once showed me uncashed STC payment cheques (13 – his lucky number and 13 letters in his surname) he found when clearing the organ loft. Despite receiving countless size 14 shirts and tailor-made trousers for his 24-inch waist (which he loved to flaunt), Sir often wore the same outfit repeatedly. This led some to believe the De Lanerolle's were not taking proper care of him, but many others directly and through us supported Sir in numerous ways until his passing.

Contrary to his modest waist size, Sir had a great appetite, and I often wondered where all the food went. Our outings in Colombo for concerts and conversations, and trips to Trinity College will be cherished memories. Sir frequently asked for mobile phones, and I gave him five; all at different points were dashed, and the last he said he threw into a drain. He requested a solar phone once upon a time, which he had read about in a newspaper, which I never got him and will be a regret in my

heart. Sir loved the environment and was very green, wanting to minimize his carbon footprint.

Sir helped me immensely when we started the Thomian chamber orchestra back in college, not only advising but also doing the unthinkable. As we didn't have a place to practice, and this was started by the students to play at Warden Neville De Alwis' farewell, Sir gave us the chapel to practice in, something he would never allow.

Sir – The Quiz Master, together with Mrs. Abeynaike, used to keep all the boys who did Western music on our toes during the inter-house music quiz. This led our committee of the Classical Music Association to launch the Annual Interschool Music Quiz in 1999.
Towards the end, Sir was diagnosed with self-neglect and frailty. On Friday, the 24th, he fell at his Mount Lavinia home and was taken to Kalubowila Hospital. During a previous (COVID-time) admission, Thomian Dr. Shehan Silva took excellent care of him in Ward Number 1, and this time too, Dr. Silva was there to help. Sir was doing well with the assistance of Kumara, an attendant. However, on Tuesday, May 28, around 9:15 PM, Sir suffered a massive heart attack while turning in bed to take his medicines. The doctors assured us he likely did not know what happened as it was so fast. I am thankful that Sir did not have to suffer in the hospital, as he was seen a couple of hours before, sitting up and eating his yogurt.

As I sat at the funeral service, I couldn't help but think that Sir wouldn't have wanted it any other way. His student Marc Billimoria, Warden, was the celebrant at the funeral requiem. His second long-standing choir leader, Asanka Perera, was the Sub Warden and choir master. His student, Fr. Samuel Ponnaiah, was the chaplain. His students Denham Pereira and Neranjan De Silva also played the organ, along with Nilhan. The senior sacristan was Rohan's son, Yohan de Lanerolle, and the choir leader was his student Enaksha's son, Pramodh Fernando.

We extend our deepest thanks to Dr. Shehan and all the Thomian doctors who helped Sir over the years. Sir's caregivers—some only lasted one day, but others, such as Seshan and Kumara, managed longer—can't be thanked enough. We also thank Sir's family, all the boys, and class groups who supported Rohan and me in caring for him.

Sir's dedication to the College was evident from an early stage. While he was at university, Warden De Saram sent him a note saying he was needed at the College. Sir immediately left his degree unfinished and rushed to assist, putting the College first, always.

I can't help but think of the hymn "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" as it was one of Sir's favorite hymns, especially the alto part. For me, the most poignant lines which fit Sir are the last ones: "Demands my soul, my life, my all." Sir definitely gave his soul, his life, and his all to S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia.

Sir, you will always make me laugh when I reminisce about the memories, remind me to eat my veggies, think over and over if I've forgotten something, strive for perfection, and always offer the best.

Sir, you were a legend unlike any other. Your legacy of excellence, dedication, and love will forever inspire us.
With heartfelt gratitude,
Your student
Ishan

'Through halls of College, his shadow roams, In every note, in every tome. His laughter, his stern, yet gentle gaze, Are etched in time, through all our days.'
Note: Since I sadly didn't have the privilege of learning English under the legendary GRLB, please forgive any grammatical missteps and stylistic quirks. I suspect Sir would have generously awarded me a 2 out of 10, and that's on a good day!

Yolantha Gunasekera
Had me in tears reading this beautiful tribute to Sir, Ishan!

Ride 4 Ceylon (Episode 2)

Some of the avid readers of the Thomiana may have read a previous article on my 2023 R4C ride (Thomina Vol 26 Issue 2). This is the continuation of that fundraising ride which I participated this year (2024) in February.

A recap of the what Ride 4 Ceylon is;

Ride 4 Ceylon better known as R4C, is a not-for-profit organisation that organise a charity ride every year and 2024 was the 8th year of the event. The funds raised through this ride is given to the Friends of Manipay Hospital Fund that provide the necessary financial support for the activities of the Green Memorial Hospital in Manipay. Dr. Jayantha Arnold is the trustee and a cofounder of both originations.

In 2024, I had the privilege of joining the R4C charity bike ride from Kandy to Jaffna via Kurunegala, Dambulla and Vavuniya with a detour to Habarana and Girithale. The event started from the last week of February 2024. As this was my third ride I was getting used to the daily routine of the ride. As usual the ride was spread across 4 days and planned to do a total of 485 km, but ended up doing 500 km. The ride registration cost included all meals and accommodation, mechanical support, insurance, transport to Kandy from Colombo and back to Colombo from Jaffna. We had 70+ riders and about 15 support staff this year. As this is a charity ride, the organisers try to cater for all riding abilities, therefore, the riders are split in to 3 groups. We had participants coming from all over the world, Melbourne, Sydney, London, Paris, Toronto, Miami, India and many from different parts of Sri Lanka.

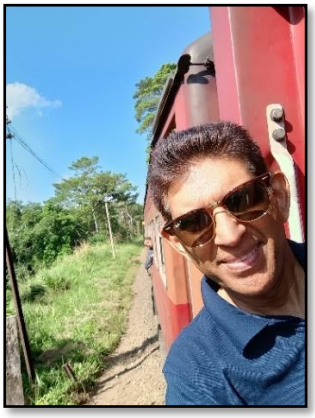
The R4C 2024 event kicked off of in Colombo with a rider briefing dinner at the Dutch Burger Union Hall. As stage 1 was to start from Kandy, the event organising committee arranged a train ride from Colombo to Peradeniya, from there we were taken on a bus to our accommodation for the night at Earl's Regent Hotel in Kandy. In the afternoon we had the privilege of going to a Dog Show hosted by the Police Kennels Division (K9 Unit) based in Kandy.

Each stage starts early in the morning before sunrise around 5 am and try to get to the destination between 9 and 10 in the morning. This was the first R4C ride that I had to do some climbing as previous years the rides were along the coast. But, as I ride in the Dandenong mountains in Melbourne, this was not an issue for me. Stage 2 ended in Dambulla, where we stayed at Jetwing Lake Hotel. We did stay for 2 nights there as we did a loop for stage 2. For the first time R4C had a loop stage, which was a very interesting ride as we rode through elephant country. As expected, we encountered elephants crossing the road along the Dambulla-Habarana stretch. Anticipating that this would occur, the event organiser had arranged local wildlife officers to escort us through this part of the ride. As we were riding through Minneriya & Girithale we saw elephants bathing in the Minneriya reservoir. At the end of stage 3 in Vavuniya, we were treated to excellent dinner and entertainment by a local dance group. The next day heading to Jaffna was the longest R4C single day ride with 150 KM. As this distance was going to be a challenge for some riders there was an option start was from Kilinochchi, which is about 75 KM to Manipay. For all the stages the event organisers arranged a police escort, therefore, the entire ride was very safe.

On the last stage, the final few kilometres to the Green Memorial Hospital were ridden as a peloton. After all the riders were welcomed and handed the finisher medals, we were treated to a scrumptious lunch. Then we had the opportunity to tour the hospital and to view the progress made from previous years fund raisers. The 2023 ride raised fund for a digital X-ray machine, which you can see in the photos below. This year, thanks to the generosity of my fellow Thomian, friends and family, I was able to raise A$2,000. As I have seen firsthand how the previously generated funds have been utilised in the hospital, I am confident the funds raised in 2024 ride will also be utilised to benefits the Manipay and wider community.

After the formalities at the Green Memorial Hospital, we headed on to Jetwing Hotel Jaffna. To wrap up the ride we had the End of Ride Social at the Jetwing Sky Lounge. This was the time to say goodbye to some riders who were staying in Jaffna for a few more days or was going on excursions. The next morning some of us headed back to Colombo in a bus organised by R4C committee. Yet again the 2024 event was well organised. I thoroughly enjoyed the ride and the company of the participating riders, so much so, I am doing it again in 2025. The 9th iteration will from Colombo to Manipay via Chilaw, Anuradhapura, Kilinochchi and Point Pedro totalling 450 KM. If anyone is interested in sponsoring me, please let me know. It is for a very worthy cause which supports a deserving community.

Colombo to Kandy



Stage 2 Start

Group 1 Ride Captain s

Stage 2 End – Group 1 and Support Team

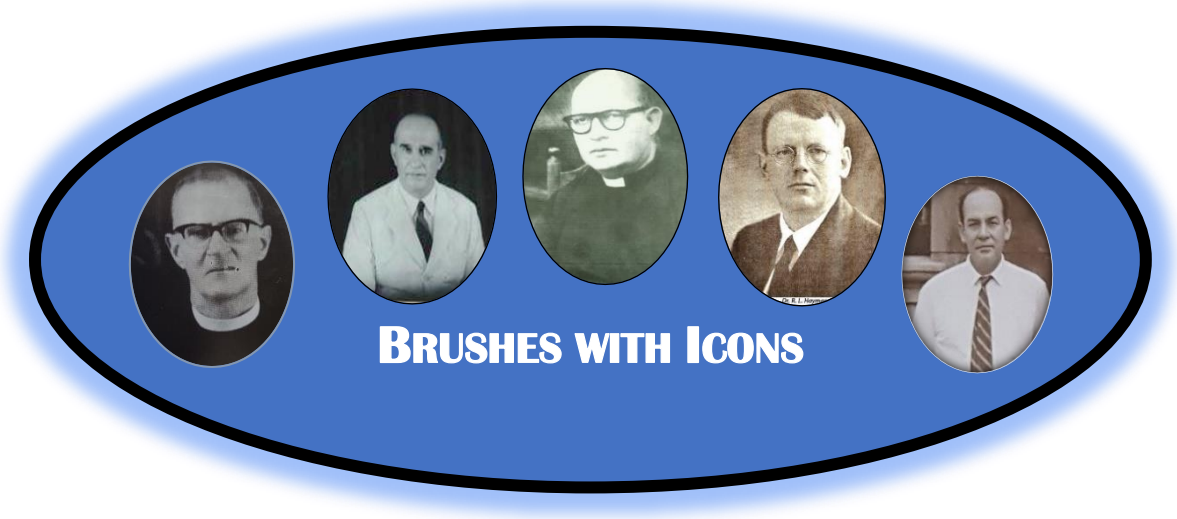
Elephant Pass

Jetwing Lake Dambulla .

R4C Support Team (Thomians)

Digital X-Ray machine .

Milinda Liyanage, Assistant Treasure (2024), Melbourne OBA



I was born into a full blooded Thomian family— my father, grandfather, uncles and grand uncles had been at St. Thomas's College, in several locations, spanning three generations from Mutwal to Mt Lavinia, Gurutalawa and even Kandy briefly during the War.

Over the years, it was inevitable that I would bump into figures that made and moulded St. Thomas's and cast long shadows even to the present day. At sixty, currently living in Adelaide, Australia, I will let my mind wander back on the trail of the men who were larger than life in the Thomian firmament, the Icons, and relate with some literary licence, my brushes with them.

C.H Davidson. Warden, when I entered the school by the sea in 1959. Perhaps, best remembered by Thomians during his tenure for opening College assembly on Wednesday mornings invariably with the announcement; "The following appointments have been made…" Known as 'Charlie' to my maternal grandparents, he and my mother's father E.H Perera were in the same College cricket team in '20–'21, which included well remembered players like Lankatilleke (perhaps the first boy of Veddah stock to play 1st X1 cricket for S. Thomas's), Bulankulame, Hinton Seneviratne and C.E.L ('Kalla') de Silva. In my first week at school, I was in Form 1B under the care of Mrs Wickramanayake, a kindly older lady who must have been someone's favourite grand aunt. She could be the gold standard for a form teacher for a 7-year-old. Before long, we were in the rough and tumble of school life playing as 7-year-olds do, 'cops and robbers', initially around the Lower School dominated by the two ancient Barringtonia trees in the courtyard, where assembly took place, with the Headmaster on the steps. The fragrance of the delicate brush-like white flowers with the pink edges still lingers in my memory. The spongy quadrangular fruits held a large brown seed which was a surrogate for a cricket ball in our formative years. Gathering confidence, we explored further afield into unfamiliar territories, the 'Tarzan' tree, the 'duck' pond and the Chapel gardens. In a terrace below the 'Tarzan' tree there was a greenhouse with glass panes on the roof. During the chase, I had got carried away and committed the unpardonable— chucking a stone at a pursuer which completely missed the target, and with a crash loud enough to wake the dead, it seemed to me, shattered the glass roof of the greenhouse. The 'cops and robbers' all abruptly came back to the real world and converged on me. The consensus among my seven-year- old class mates was clear. I would be expelled from school! Torrents of thoughts ran through my mind as I fled down the slope past the Chapel and Kottang trees, in my fevered imagination being hotly pursued by the Warden and teachers, to the safety of the Lower School.

I had just entered St. Thomas's College after months of proud anticipation. The grand old school

my family had attended for generations, and now, I had committed this heinous black crime in my very first week. I sought sanctuary in my classroom 1B in the arms of my teacher, Mrs Wickramanayake, who was very comforting. Before long, I was visited by the 'long arm of the law'. My uncle Asoka Perera, was a College Senior Prefect. He had heard about the incident and had come in the lunch interval to console me. My friends gave their opinion that having a prefect for a close relation was a good thing under the circumstances!

Over the next few days, I lurked about uneasily like a criminal evading the law and by the end of the week there was still no summons from the much feared and respected Headmaster, J.H.S Pieris (or 'Pieraiya' as he was known to the boys, or his taciturn deputy, Deutrom 'Bamboo' David; they both wielded the cane from which the latter derived his nickname) for my misdemeanour. However, when I got home on Friday, I was given the shocking news that the Warden himself was visiting us. I knew what I had done was wrong, criminal perhaps, according to the views of most of my classmates, but the Warden's visit home was totally unexpected. *Perhaps he did this for the really serious crime,* I thought. Being so new in school I had only glimpsed the great man once or twice. A slightly stooped figure with a pipe, very fair, with a bald head, trudging alone, to his office at 'Thalassa' diagonally across the Big Club grounds, from the fives courts end.

I was petrified at the prospect of being expelled for throwing stones in my very first week. What humiliation for my family! With my father Dr Lakshman Lecamwasam a physician in Galle, I was attending St. Thomas's College, staying with my maternal grandparents in Nedimala, Dehiwala. The household was all agog and paid little heed to my misery and sense of foreboding at the Warden's visit.

Ominously, I thought, I was warned to be on my 'best behaviour' and to watch my ps and qs in conversation during the visit. Warden Davidson came alone; Mrs Davidson was indisposed and sent her apologies. He was greeted warmly by my grandfather and grandmother. After the initial formalities, greetings and banter, the moment came. "This is Deepal who has just started in form 1", my grandfather Herbie said. Assuming, as Warden, he knew all about the stone throwing incident, I stepped forward, wan and feeling hopeless, like someone about to receive a lethal injection. "How do you do?" he asked gravely stretching out his hand. A few questions followed: which class was I in, who was the form teacher, who were my friends? Playing safe, I mentioned Christopher Thomas (son of Canon Thomas) and Mohan Abeynaike (son of Orville, the much-respected senior master and 1st X1 cricket coach), he seemed satisfied I wasn't in undesirable company. Just when I felt waves of huge relief welling inside me, and I couldn't believe my good fortune, my grandmother (who was clearly a great mate of Charlie's), bless her, blurted out my stone throwing escapade earlier in the week!! A frown came over clouding the Warden's benevolent features. This was it! The judgement sealing my fate was about to be pronounced. The world stood still as I waited, bathed in perspiration. "Hmmm" he said ponderously. "That wasn't good. Young man, you mustn't do that again." And then he resumed his convivial conversation with my grandfather.

What an anticlimax!! I was dizzy with delight— I was off the hook and a free boy, and despite that awful first week, was ready to resume my schooling at S. Thomas's, keeping to the confines of the law. In later years, with my grandparents and mother Chitra, I visited the Warden in his retirement at his residence in Wellawatta, and also met his wife who looked lovely but seemed quite frail. As a post script to the story, I have since heeded Warden Davidson's advice and never threw stones at glass panes again!

Warden De Saram. He was probably, the greatest star in the Thomian pantheon of Gods. My encounter with him was some years after he retired from college. I was holidaying in upcountry, Nuwara Eliya with my family in 1963 when I was aged 11. My uncle Priya, in the Royal Ceylon Navy at the time, had been in college when Canon De Saram was Warden in the 1950's. He felt that I should meet the Great Man who at the time was residing at the Holy Trinity Church in Nuwara Eliya. Before going I was coached for this important visit. I was to look up (not furtively away) and speak clearly when spoken to. All that seemed straight forward enough…

When we visited, he emerged from the house to greet my uncle who treated him respectfully. At a glance I could tell he was a commanding personality, at a time when masters at S. Thomas's

were huge personalities, revered and feared, dominating the stage. They had taught generations and were strict disciplinarians who didn't hesitate to mete out 'six of the best' with canes when they deemed it necessary, not belonging to the liberal school of thought that espoused 'sparing the rod and spoiling the child'. Canon De Saram was clearly not one of those you took your chances with. As far as learning and discipline went, even to me as an 11-year-old, he looked the real deal—the sort who wouldn't hesitate to hand it out to you if you deserved it, brooking no nonsense. He spoke in a slightly nasal, stentorian voice, very precisely. After a short conversation with my uncle, I was introduced as a young Thomian. Canon De Saram then devoted the next few minutes, politely though formally, to interrogating me. How old was I, what class was I in, who was my form teacher, was I interested in sports? I knew these were coming as I had been prepared and the answers should have been quite straightforward, but I was clearly quite overwhelmed and overawed by the sense of occasion, perhaps, looking pop-eyed and gawping like a goldfish. Let alone Canon De Saram, I could barely hear myself when replying. It seemed I was speaking underwater as I bleated out my feeble replies. "Are you feeling all right, boy?" he demanded. "Sir, yes sir." I gurgled unconvincingly. Having become satisfied that he had given me some 'quality time', he turned to my uncle and declared diagnostically, "Lecamwasam, this boy has adenoids. Have them attended to." At the time I had no idea what he was talking about but remember being very relieved to leave the Holy Trinity Church that day.

Father Foster. I was taken to meet Father Foster by my mother's brother E.H. Perera (junior), who was in Gurutalawa during its halcyon glory days under the tutelage of Dr Hayman and Father Foster. My uncle was very fond of him. He was a deeply religious man who was also very kind to the non-Christians; getting to know them better by inviting them to share his love of classical music records in his study. On one such occasion my uncle describes a classmate, keen to show off his knowledge of classical music and composers, announced to the others when strains of soft music filled the room, "Ah, I recognise this one. It's composed by Shakespeare"! When I met him, Father Foster was tall and distinguished and had a kindly look. He showed us around the College and gardens, and remember him showing an unusual fruit tree that Dr Hayman had cultivated, a persimmon, which I had never heard of till then. He chuckled as he explained how he had successfully protected the fruits till ripe from the marauding boarders who had taken it upon themselves as a special challenge to pick the forbidden fruit.

Dr Hayman. I didn't have the pleasure of meeting Dr Hayman personally during my years at college, though; he did visit St. Thomas's from England and addressed the school at a special assembly. I also had the honour of winning a form prize he had donated in memory of his father, W.S Hayman, during my College Form years. I was doing medical post graduate training in England in 1981 when I heard he was in retirement in Bournemouth, in the south coast of England. As Doctor and Mrs Hayman were very welcoming towards old Thomians visiting them, I called him and found him very keen to meet me, my wife Priyani, and cousin Harshini, who was visiting Bournemouth from Sri Lanka. The Haymans were very kind and hospitable and we had a most enjoyable visit. Following this, I was surprised to receive a lengthy letter from him. He explained that at the time it had not struck him that my father Lakshman was well remembered by him. He said he had records with pictures of the outstanding students he had taught and he was sorry he hadn't made the connection at the time, that I was 'Lakshman Lecamwasam's son'. This, needless to say, would have been a priceless letter for my archives, but I regret to say it appears to have been 'lost in international travel'.

Brooke D'Silva. A genial man who was larger than life, bestriding the college forms as a colossus. He was Headmaster of the Upper School, well known athletics coach, and a well-respected teacher in biology. However, I was not in a position to appreciate any of the above when I was summoned into his office under rather tense circumstances as a 16-year-old...

It had been one of those situations where the conduct in the biology class could be easily described as 'rowdy and disorderly' as it sadly was. The biology teacher Mr Lambert Abeyratne's mannerisms and eccentricities leant themselves easily to the provocative nature of the fairly large element at the back of the class (the 'stirrers') who had **not** come to S. Thomas's with aspirations of academic success. Many subversive strategies were spawned to disrupt the zeal in

which Mr Abeyratne taught biology, but on that day, the popular method was to 'hum'. As this may not mean anything to the uninitiated reader who has lived an unblemished life in the classroom, I will explain. It is an ingenious method where by, apparently following the lesson with cherubic innocence and concentration, one develops the art of emitting a low humming noise from the back of the throat. This, when combined with nearly 40 other voices, can produce a distinct rumbling noise which wasn't exactly the music of the Vienna Boys Choir. On the contrary, it was, at its least, an annoying distraction which rudely competed with the complexities of biology. At its worst, or loudest, could be a nasty roar which easily drowned out poor Lambert. The beauty of it was that, though he certainly **knew** there were many miscreants, he couldn't definitely accuse anyone in particular. For all intents and purposes, the students appeared to be innocently concentrating on the lesson. When the humming reached its terrible crescendo and the noise was masterfully orchestrated with no visible conductor, with the intensity coordinated and modulated from barely audible to a deafening *fortissimo*, the effect was as if a swarm of angry bees were swirling above in the Upper Sixth classroom. Poor Lambert had enough! He was not a man to see the funny side of it. Instead, he threw up his arms in a gesture of despair, took umbrage and marched off defiantly, slamming the classroom door behind him. The sense of triumph and hilarity that ensued was short lived, as, before long he returned, not alone, but with 'Brookie', few steps behind, who looked as black as a thundercloud! He strode in purposefully into the classroom. We knew the jig was up, as Brookie D'Silva, the Headmaster of the Upper School, wasn't the sort, of boy! you messed about with. Retribution, we knew, would be swift and painful. Clearly, he had been given the full, ball-by-ball graphic description by his teacher. His was of a simple practical nature, for he instinctively knew that asking for the perpetrators to own up and admit to the crime was an absolute waste of time. He therefore decreed that EVERYONE gets caned— two cuts each, and we were presently invited to his office. After a short, sharp speech on our moral depravity and disgraceful behaviour which, in his opinion, was not befitting Thomian classroom expectations, we were then asked to line up for 'remedial treatment' meted out with his feared rattan cane. I have vivid memories of what ensued; each of us waited nervously in the queue, unconvincingly denying the humming. Brookie was reputed to have deft wrists— his reputation I was to find out first hand when my turn came, was well deserved indeed. Before I received two cuts, he hesitated briefly and said, with an air of disgust, "Lecamwasam, I taught your father. He would have never done this!" With that he delivered two stinging blows on the seat of my pants which, I still remember, as hurting less than what he told me!

I'll have to confess belatedly now, about 45 years on, that, in my weakness; I certainly **did** indulge in that delightful period of madness and thoroughly enjoyed it! Subsequently I got my just desserts (the law of Karma does work!) at the O/level exam failing a subject for the one and only time in my career. This was the one subject that mattered most in my quest to become a doctor— biology! Though I had to suffer the ignominy of having to do the fairly basic O/level exam for the **second** time, it gave me the wonderful opportunity of spending an extra year at S. Thomas's! I also now have the unique bragging rights to say, and I only mention this in the hope it inspires someone else, that after failing the GCE O/level examination, that I made a strong comeback, with true Thomian spirit, to become a consultant physician!

Deepal Lecamwasam *(STC ML 1959-1971)*

Doctor MD, FRCP (Lond.) FRACP FCCP (Fellow, Ceylon College of Physicians)
Was a School Prefect and won colours in 2nd XI cricket. Founding President of the STC OBA in South Australia in 2019. Served at the Royal Adelaide Hospital as a Geriatrician for 23 years prior to retirement in 2023.

TRUTH WITHOUT HURT – PART 3

By Jayakumar Thangavelu (STC ML 1955-1963), Ex Deputy Inspector General, Sri Lanka Police

This is a 3-part series of a frank account of the immeasurable challenges faced by an individual who spent his entire career in the Sri Lankan Police Force from 1970 to 2007, and survived to tell his story. Part 1 was published in the Thomiana January 2024, Part 2 in May 2024. This is the final Part.

A SENIOR POLICE OFFICER'S PERSPECTIVE OF INVESTIGATIONS INTO POLITICAL CRIMES

4. INVESTIGATION IN RELATION TO LTTE CRIMES

4.1. Among the investigations concerning LTTE related crimes, those noteworthy are:

a) Arrest of 3 LTTE suspects who were fleeing after the robbery of a bank at Chenkaladi, Batticaloa in 1977. I was proceeding unarmed with a team of officers from the CID to investigate a politically related complaint in Batticaloa. On hearing of the bank being robbed by an armed gang who escaped in a car, we turned the car around and gave chase to the fleeing car from which some shots were fired. Having followed them a while and realizing they had exhausted all their ammunition, we closed in on them and took into custody 3 of the 4 suspects and recovered the entire loot. The 4th suspect was arrested about two months later in Hatton.

I questioned the suspects without resort to third degree methods and they were indicted in the High Court where I was the principal witness. At the voire-dire inquiry for admissibility of confession by Court, the suspects never alleged any force whatsoever being used on them. All were sentenced to 5 years rigorous imprisonment. They were defended by the late Hon. M. Sivasithamparam, Member of Parliament.

b) In March1981, following the heist of gold jewellery valued Rs. 38 million and cash Rs. 8.1 million from Peoples Bank, Neerveli, Jaffna and killing of Policemen – by Prabakaran, along with others of the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) – the Leader of the TELO Nadarajah Thangathurai, Selvarajah Yogachandran alias Kuttimani and Selvadurai Sivsubramaniam alias Thevan were arrested about a week later by the Navy on a tip off. These three were arrested, when they were boarding a boat for India from "Manal Kadu" Point Pedro with the robbed jewellery. They were brought to Colombo and detained at Panagoda Army Camp. In Colombo several Tamil Police officers, some natives of Jaffna and others who had served in Jaffna were proffering expert advice on the terrain of Jaffna in assisting the investigation. I, who was an Inspector of Police then, had to take a back seat as my knowledge of Jaffna was negligible. But when the base of investigations was shifted to the Army Camp Elephant Pass, all these expert officers shied off. Finally, I was the only Tamil officer concerned in the investigations based at the Army Camp Elephant Pass for three months.

c) My motivation to investigate any crime was the training and confidence instilled in me by my mentor Mr. Tyrell Goonetilleke and his conviction that if an investigator performs his obligations without considering himself the Judge & Jury, within the frame work of the law, desisting from torture, he need not fear investigating any crime. It was the investigator's responsibility only to elicit evidence and present it to court. It was the court which had to decide on the guilt of the suspect.

d) The then Inspector General of Police, Mr Ana Seneviratne, who visited Elephant Pass appreciated my services as the only Tamil officer.

e) Before shifting the base of investigation to Elephant Pass, I was tasked with the responsibility of questioning Kuttimani at the Panagoda Army Camp. Here he informed me, without my laying a finger on him, where he and Prabakaran buried Rs. 3.1 million of the Rs. 8.1 million robbed from the Neerveli bank, three days following the robbery. As an experienced investigator through probing cross questions, one could be certain whether the suspect was telling the truth or not.

f) Subsequently, it was decided by the top authorities of the CID to take the least important suspect of the three, Thevan, to Jaffna to conduct surprise raids on places to be pointed by the suspect.

g) I requested them to give me Kuttimni and that I would bring Rs. 3.1 million. My request was turned down saying Kuttimani was too much an important person to lose. I said if Kuttimani was to escape, he will have to escape with my life. I was still in active Boxing then.

h) Five teams in five Jeeps left Colombo under the command of an ASP, stayed the night over at Palaly Army camp and left at first light the following morning. I was dropped with 3 Police officers at the house of Sri Sabaratnam (who subsequently led the TELO). I had recorded the statement of Sri Sabaratnam previously. My instructions were for me and my team to conduct a search of the house and be there until the rest of the party returned. No incriminating evidence was found at this house.

i) The house where Kuttimani referred to as having buried the money was that of a postal peon down the lane right opposite the house of Sri Sabaratnam.

j) At about 3 pm the ASP returned with the rest of the party absolutely exhausted and mostly frustrated as no detections whatsoever had been made and wanted me to immediately return to base with him. I had to plead with him to go to the house of the postal peon. There was a big crowd in the house due to the ceremony of the peon's daughter's attaining age. I wanted to dig the place behind the well (where the "thula" strikes the ground) as told by Kuttimani, but the ASP bluntly refused to give me permission. Hence, I picked a photograph of the peon from a photo album. When this was shown to Kuttimani in Colombo he confirmed that it was the house of this peon. When we returned to the house the day after, we found the very spot where the money was said to have been buried freshly dug and noticed malathion sprinkled against insect attack as described by Kuttimani, but the bag of money missing. Prabakaran had removed the bag of money the same evening we first visited.

k) When Kuttimani was sentenced to imprisonment by the High Court set up at Buller's Road, Colombo 7, he mentioned to Court that all Officers detailed to investigate their crimes, physically attacked him excluding me. He too was defended by the Late Hon M. Sivasithamparam, Member of Parliament.

l) I gained the confidence of Kuttimani, who disclosed to me that after Prabakaran fell out with Uma Maheswaran in 1980, the LTTE suffered a setback. At that time the TELO was the most effective militant group besides the LTTE. Consequently, Prabakaran had contacted Kuttimani saying he would like to join the TELO. When Kuttimani told this to Thangathurai the latter had said "Kutti" we must be careful, as "Thambi" (Prabakaran), was a dangerous guy and he (Thangathurai) did not know why Prabakaran wanted to join them. But within a few days Prabakaran had somehow inveigled himself into Thangathurai's group and participated in several crimes of the group, including the Neerveli Bank robbery.

m) Kuttimani confided in me that they were of the belief that it was Prabakaran who tipped off the Navy, which led to their arrest. Kuttimani also said that Prabakaran did not tolerate any threat to his supremacy.

n) I have been concerned in investigations pertaining to LTTE related crimes in Belgium, Holland, Germany and India. I visited India with the IGP and Director CID where Prabakaran and Uma Maheswaran were held in custody following the shoot-out between them at Pondy Bazar, Chennai.

5. Straying into LTTE stronghold in Karadiyanaru

5.1. It is this culture of investigation without torture that saved me from disaster at the hands of the LTTE when I strayed into their territory in Karadiyanaru in 2004, during the period of the peace accord. This was when I went in two Police vehicles – a jeep and double cab, both unmarked, driven by Sinhala drivers and a friend of mine resident in the UK and working for British Airways. We were returning having distributed food stuff and other essential items in the East coast following the Tsunami. We wanted to come to Colombo via Badulla. When we went past a temporary barrier at Karadiyanaruwe were confronted by the LTTE, who did a thorough search of our persons and vehicles. We had our Police Identity Cards, but no weapons. I told them that I had by an oversight entered their territory, having performed the noble cause of distributing essential items to the victims of the Tsunami, and that since they did not find any weapons on us they must permit us to turn back.

5.2. One LTTEer tried to communicate over a walkie talkie and even climbed a tree to get clear coverage and on failing left on a motor cycle saying he will come back soon. The time was around 4 pm. When it was nearing 6 pm and getting dark I feared for the security of my two drivers who had young families, and decided to confront the LTTEers. I reminded them again of my noble cause and of our being unarmed, that we intended no malice against them and therefore to let us go, failing which I was going to my vehicle and all they could do was to shoot me. They then begged me to give them 15 minutes and that word would come from the leadership. I said I would give them only 15 minutes and began praying silently as I necessarily had to carry out my threat, failing which I would become a laughing stock to them, which would be detrimental to all of us. By God's grace, the motor cyclist came within about 10 minutes and gave us permission to proceed through their

territory to Maha Oya and from there we were to proceed to Badulla as planned. The LTTE would definitely have known about me. Perhaps, we were spared because of my professional reputation as one who functioned by the rules within the remit of duty.

6. Investigations into JVP related crimes

6.1. After my promotion as an Asst Superintendent of Police, I was transferred as ASP Crimes Nugegoda Division. During the violence of the JVP in the 1987 to 1989 era, I was directed to carry out investigations in Colombo, Nugegoda and Mt Lavinia Divisions enlisting 6 Inspectors of Police (IP) to lead 6 teams. Late DIG Mr Piyasena who was then SSP Nugegoda Division was overall in charge. Owing to the fear police officers had of the JVP, who had resorted to killing of Police Officers and frequently their family members, I could only get one IP and had to settle for him and two Probationary Sub Inspectors Warnasooriya and Rajapakse to head three teams.

6.2 The JVP threw a grenade at the house of SSP Mr Piyasena in Nugegoda, shot dead SI Rajapakse at his house in Maharagama and cut open his stomach in the presence of his mother, and shot SI Warnasooriya, at Delkanda, Nugegoda. This SI sustained three bullet injuries and had to undergo three surgeries and still has a bullet embedded in his spine. He prematurely retired from the Police in the rank of Chief Inspector.

6.3. In fact an SSP, who was heading a unit of the Intelligence Division of the Police resigned his position as the head of that Unit and he was succeeded by SSP Mr. Nimal Lionel Gunatilleke (the Late Retired DIG).

6.4 I did not receive even a threatening call or letter. In fact, I had thirteen hard core JVPers who were concerned in serious crimes and of which two were giving very vital information of crimes hitherto unsolved. One such case was the killing of Independent Student Union leader of the Colombo University Daya Pathirana, who was murdered by slitting his throat at a ferry point in Horana. Until the time of the arrest of these hardcore JVPers, the JVP was blaming the UNP government, whilst the government was blaming the JVP. Some University Students were in custody for a long period of time over this murder. It was suspect Hewahettige Jayatissa of Maharagama, who confessed to me of having abducted Daya Pathirana at Thunmulla junction and killing him at Horana. Consequently, the University Students who were in remand were enlarged on bail.

6.5. From time-to-time Jayatissa also confessed to several other murders and bank robberies. As a result of his continuing revelations, I had him together with one R.M. Karunaratne of Homagama who too was providing valuable information, placed in a cell at Welikada Police, as this was the closest Police station in Nugegoda Police Division, to my quarters at Maradana Police.

6.6. With these disclosures I was transferred back to the CID and special teams were formed to investigate their crimes.

6.7. Suspect RM Karunaratne called for me one evening at about 9 pm from Welikada Police, where he was held for over two weeks, and told me that though he had confessed to me many crimes committed, he had withheld a vital piece of information and that this had troubled his conscience. The suspect then informed me of an impending attack on a military installation close to Colombo that very night, or the following night, which he was not certain as it was to be perpetrated after midnight. The JVP had decided on it at a meeting he attended before his arrest. I immediately informed Mr O.K. Hemachandra, who was an SP in the CID and was residing close to Welikada Police. Mr. Hemachandra too came and interviewed him and we passed this information to the higher ups in the Police

The very next night, the Kotelawala Defence Academy was attacked and nine soldiers were killed and their weapons stolen. The same night, the Katunayake Air Force Base too was attacked. Two insurgents were killed in this incident. I had to go to Katunayake at 2 am for investigation

Would any suspect volunteer such information after two weeks in custody, had he been subjected to third degree and / or degrading treatment?

7. The Paranagama Missing Persons Commission

7.1. The Chairman of the present Missing Persons Commission, appointed by the previous regime of H.E. Mahinda Rajapakse, inquired from me whether I could assist his Commission as the Chief Investigating Officer. I said, "Yes, I would definitely like to assist you, but nominate my name and see what the powers-that-be have to say". That was the last I heard from the Chairman.

8. A comparison between the Udalagama Commission and the Lalith Athulathmudali and Kobbekaduwa Commission.

a) I have previously served as the Chief Investigation Officer in the Lalith Athulathmudali and Kobbekaduwa Commission. The Chairman of this Commission was the Deputy Chief Justice at the time and the other two

members were late Hon. Justices D.P.S. Gunasekara (then a Judge of the Court of Appeal) and Gamini Amaratunga (then a Judge of the High Court). They both retired later as Judges of the Supreme Court.

b) In both Commissions, the Chairman appeared to have an agenda which was contrary to the spirit of an independent commission, viz. a political witch hunt to blame late President Premadasa for both killings, without an iota of evidence.

c) A woman in her late thirties from Weli Oya, a mother of a twelve-year-old girl, appeared before the Commission and related fanciful, improbable and implausible tales. Amongst her narratives was that she was married to a 24-year-old soldier attached to the security detail of Gen. Kobbekaduwa and that this soldier was the father of her 12-year-old daughter. She said her soldier husband was close to Brigadier Ananda Weerasekara (now Ven Ananda Thero in a temple in Ampara) who was appointed by late President Premadasa as the Head of the Rehabilitation Authority to rehabilitate JVPers.

d) I dispatched a team of Policemen, from my unit to Weli Oya, to check on the veracity of the statement of the woman and of her antecedents. They reported that woman was a prostitute in Weli Oya living close to an ambush point of the Sri Lanka Army and was commonly known as 'Ambush Nona'.

e) The Chairman on hearing this admonished me for checking on her antecedents saying that this was a Commission of Inquiry and not a Court of Inquiry and that he could admit any evidence.

f) The Chairman ordered me to apply for a Detention Order on the soldier. I asked the Chairman what the charge was. He asked me why I wanted to know the charge. I said that I had to explain the charge to him, record his statement in relation to the charge and if there was prima facie evidence, then apply for the detention order. The Chairman told me, "You first apply for the detention order and the statement could be recorded later". I then asked him of the applicability of the principle of 'audi alteram partem' (hear the other side). The Chairman then said, "We will look into it tomorrow".

g) However, the very following day, I was transferred out of the Commission back to the CID. The other two Commissioners, the late Justices Gunasekara and Amaratunga told me that I was lucky to leave the Commission as there will be another Commission on this Commission. They too resigned from the Commission within a couple of weeks.

h) Prior to my transfer, Brigadier Weerasekara was summoned to the Commission without my knowledge. Since I had not summoned the Brigadier, I was surprised as to who had summoned him and was told it was a civilian attached to the commission.

i) The Brigadier had been summoned by this civilian, who was neither in the Legal Profession, nor was a Public Servant. He was the leader of a western "Rock" musical band in Colombo. Neither the other two Commissioners, nor I, knew his status on the Commission. His credentials were that he moved very closely with the Chairman.

j) I then told the Brigadier that I would call the person who summoned him and for the Brigadier to ask him, before making his statement, the reason why he was summoned. Accordingly, when the Brigadier posed this question to the civilian in my presence, the civilian looked at me in askance. I told him he should answer the question since it was, he who had summoned the Brigadier. On the civilian not being able to reply, I apologized to the Brigadier for the embarrassment caused and politely told him he was free to go.

k) When compared to the Udalagama Commission, which was carefully constituted and designed to standards compatible with reputed Commissions in the International scene, the Lalith Athulathmudali and Kobbekaduwa Commission was biased and bereft of natural justice, on account of the predilections of the Chairman of this Commission.

9. Serious injury in grenade explosion at Kolonnawa oil tank installations

8.5. Subsequent to the LTTE exploding the Kolonnawa Oil Tank Installations in 1995, I was at the scene at about 3:45 am. and whilst I was speaking to an SSP and four ASPs I heard something falling behind me and noticed an object which was about just six inches behind me, which then exploded and I saw the embers falling. I felt my internal organs going haywire. I coughed out blood and dropped to the ground unable, to breathe, nor move. I prayed to God who made me get up and run amidst rapid gun fire. I ran about 100 yards and the SSP, who was taking shelter brought me in his car to the accident service of General Hospital, Colombo.

8.6. Through sheer determination I kept myself conscious until I was wheeled into the operating theatre and there, I heard someone say "check his blood group, his pulse rate is dropping". I knew I was close to dying and yelled that I was A+, and allergic to Penicillin, and that I was bleeding inside and that I could not breathe. I was subsequently informed that I had a cardiac arrest that

very moment. Twelve pellets had entered my body and my left lung was ruptured. Of the 12 pellets, one was in my heart adjacent to the coronary sinus and this was removed after fifteen years in 2010 when I underwent a cardiac by-pass surgery. The pellet was given to me as a souvenir in a bottle by the Heart Surgeon. The 11 other pellets are yet in my body.

Twenty three persons died in this incident as a result of "friendly fire" in the aftermath of two grenade explosions at the time of the incident. My car which was about 20 meters away from where I had fallen had 9 bullet holes.

It is by the Grace of my Lord Jesus Christ that I am miraculously alive today and without any impairment to my sight or hearing.

It is only God who has the Right of Life and Death over his all his creation, and no other, however powerful and mighty they be.

Conclusion

I have put down my experience to assist thinking about the task the country is faced with in the wake of the UNHRC resolution. Truth seeking is here the principal task. My experience tells me that persons complicit in crimes are more likely to tell the truth when not confronted with the threat of punishment. Placing the untrammelled truth on record is the primary task. The question of crimes during the war by both sides is besides a criminal, also a political issue requiring consideration of mitigating factors. While individual responsibility remains paramount in law, those carrying arms who committed crimes on both sides, are also victims of the political dispensation and propaganda by others not involved in the fighting that spurred crimes against humanity. The question of punishment requires careful consideration by a separate court under appropriate guidelines.

Editor's Note: *Jayakumar Thangavelu is a retired Deputy Inspector General of Police in Sri Lanka. He had his entire education at S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia, between 1955 and '63; and graduated in Law (LLB) while serving in the Police Force. He was a successful criminal investigator and a forceful participant in implementing better policing of human rights in Sri Lanka. He has investigated all types of serious crimes both locally and internationally and was awarded a Special Certificate from the Asian Human Rights Commission in Hong Kong, in January 2006.*

Jayakumar was also a much-feared boxer in his college days, commencing his career at the age of 14 of years and captained the college team at the age of 15 years, fighting in the Welter Weight - under 100 pounds. He won the Police 'Best Boxer's' Title in the Inter-Divisional Boxing meets many times and went on to claim the National Boxing Titles on four occasions

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 titbits 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.*

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*

Sporting Heroes of Yesteryear...

ANURA TENNEKOON – A Cricketer and a Gentleman

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). In this edition, we feature a unique individual in the field of cricket, regarded as one of world cricket's technically most equipped batsmen during his time, who has dedicated his life to the development of cricket in Sri Lanka.

Anura Punchi Banda (APB) Tennekoon was born on 29 October 1946 in Anuradhapura, and fondly known as "Attaya" due to his slim stature. He entered College (Mount Lavinia) at the age of 8 (1954) and left in 1966. He was a boarder during his entire time at College, firstly in Winchester House and subsequently in Miller-Chapman. It was in the hostel that Anura was first exposed to cricket, where the boarders indulging in sports during their free time, mostly during weekends and public holidays.

Anura recalls his memories of his initial exposure to cricket that laid the foundation for his career – *"Leather ball cricket practices were conducted for different age groups from 4 to 6 p.m. However, during the free time we had, our choice of cricket was with the tennis ball. Tennis ball cricket was of three forms. One was with eleven boys on each side with over arm bowling and the traditional pitch of 22 yards; the second game while having eleven boys per side, was with under arm bowling at a distance of approximately 10 feet. In both these forms the wicket was a metal sheet supported by a stick behind it. The bats used were wooden poles of 2 inches in width, which required a lot of concentration in order to connect the deliveries bowled at you. In the game where under arm bowling took place, there were expert bowlers who were able to squeeze the tennis ball and make it turn like a leg break or off break, giving little hint to the batsmen as to which way the ball would turn. The participants in these games comprised of senior and junior boys, which made it hard for the juniors. However, this enabled them to handle pressure at a very young age, whilst developing their eye in having to bat with a pole half the width of a normal cricket bat".*

"The third form of cricket was called Fives Court Cricket. Fives was similar to squash with the main difference being that fives was played with the bare hands instead of a racket. The fives ball was slightly bigger and harder than the squash ball. There were four fives courts in the College and since fives was not played by many boys, there was always two to three courts vacant. The Boarders therefore devised a form of cricket in the fives courts, where the wickets were drawn on the wall behind the batsman in chalk or brick. The bat used once again was the same two-inch pole used in the other two formats. This game could only be played with four individuals due to the confined space, with one batting, another bowling under arm and two others fielding. Scoring could only be done by hitting the ball on the wall directly in front of the batsman. Two runs were given for a stroke hit along the ground. A stroke which was hit over the butt, a wooden panel at a height of about four feet off the ground earned four runs. If the batsman was able to hit the ball directly on to the wall in front of him full for it to ricochet on to the wall behind him, six runs were awarded. The batsman had to be cautious in lofting the ball as catches were permitted off the walls on either side of the batsman and directly in front. Due to this factor, I mainly concentrated on hitting the ball along the ground and earning two runs without trying to score fours and sixes. In this manner I was able to bat for a long time much to the annoyance of the other participants. It must be said that this form of cricket helped me when playing the orthodox form of cricket with the leather ball, as I had perfected the art of scoring runs in the V whilst keeping the ball along the ground."

"During the school holidays as we were residing in Kandy, the boys from the neighbourhood assembled on the road in the evenings and played cricket with the tennis ball and a standard bat. Here again we were compelled to hit the ball straight as if we did not, the thick shrub on either side forced us to search for the tennis ball depriving us of valuable playing time. There were occasions on which boys who played cricket on the roads as we did, challenged us for tennis ball cricket matches; and as flat land was scarce in Kandy, these matches were played on paddy fields that had dried out after harvesting. As the playing surface was uneven and the bounce of the ball unpredictable, scoring runs was an arduous task. On reflection, I feel that all these forms of cricket that I participated in helped me to develop as a batsman and cricketer and enabled me to represent the country at the highest level of cricket".

Anura went up the ranks of junior cricket very quickly and was in the first IX team from 1962 – 1966. In 1962, at the age of 16, he was picked to play for the Royal Thomian only on the morning of the match. For the final spot, Keith Labrooy, the Thomian captain, selected him to the team for the Big Match over his brother Robin. This would have been a tough decision for Keith but was made keeping the requirements of the team in mind, displaying credible leadership. Anura was able to justify his selection with a record-breaking partnership with Paul Selvadurai for the 7th wicket of 88 runs when the Thomians were reduced to a dismal 86 for 6. Although this encounter was one of significance to his cricketing career, he recalls the Big Match in 1964 played at the P. Sara stadium as the most memorable he has participated in, as we achieved an outright victory after 10 long years of drawn games and that too in two playing days rather than the three playing days as at present. He was chosen as Sri Lanka's best schoolboy batsman in 1964 and had the best batting average of 56.84 in the previous season, having scored a total of 513 runs.

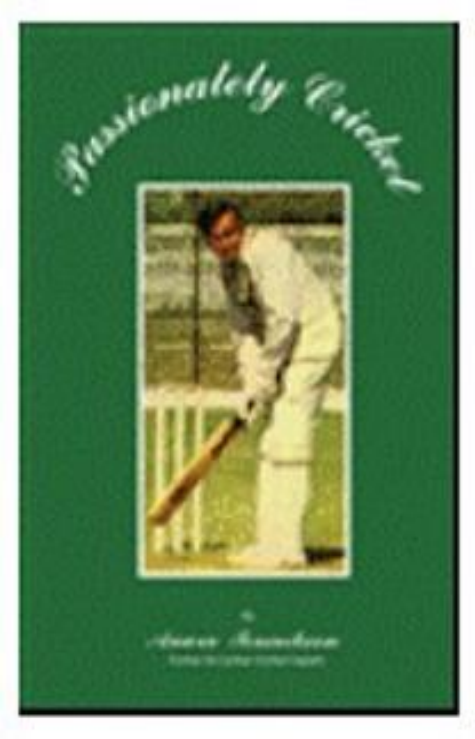
Best Schoolboy Batsman - 1964

Anura receiving the Champions Trophy in the qualifying tournament for the World Cup

Anura captained the Sri Lankan team in the inaugural World Cup held in England in 1975 and followed up by leading the side in the 1979 World Cup. He was known for his technical brilliance as a batsman. He started his ODI career with a duck against the West Indies. But in the 1979 World Cup, he gave a glimpse of his class with a fine fifty against New Zealand at Trent Bridge. He injured his left calf muscle in the match against NZ and missed the rest of the matches in the tournament. This included the match against India at Old Trafford when Sri Lanka pulled off an upset win.

Sri Lanka received full member status of the International Cricket Council in 1982, two years after Anura's retirement. The achievements of Sri Lankan players like Anura may have contributed to this. 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).

After his retirement, Anura has functioned as the manager of the Sri Lanka A Cricket Team. He was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Sri Lanka Cricket, the governing body for cricket in Sri Lanka, in December 2000 and held the position until late 2003. In 2009, he was appointed to the selection committee for the national cricket team. Anura was conferred a *Deshabandu* award by President Maithripala Sirisena in 2019 for his contribution to the upliftment of cricket in Sri Lanka and for his services as Team Member and Captain in the Pre-Test cricketing era.



In March 2020, he unveiled his autobiography titled ***Passionately Cricket*** which he indicated as a tribute to his wife Nelun and also dedicated the book to her. He revealed that his wife had typed out the transcripts for the autobiography and he highlighted that the autobiography contains the life trajectory of how his journey as a cricketer began from schooling days. He launched his autobiography on a special occasion at the Sinhalese Sports Club. He also handed over the first copy of his book to his former captain and Old Thomian, Michael Tissera.

Anura presenting 1st copy of the book to Mr. Michael Tissera, former Thomian and Sri Lankan cricket captain

Legendary Sri Lankan batsman Aravinda De Silva obtaining Anura's autograph on a book

There were tributes from several SL cricketers included in the publication, summarized below:

Mahela Jayawardena: *Anura Tennekoon is one of Sri Lanka Crickets most loyal and dedicated servants, a fine batsman, a shrewd leader, and one of the key players who helped us to secure Test status. After his playing career he has been both a passionate coach and a committed administrator, widely respected for his integrity and honesty.*

Kumar Sangakkara: *Anura Tennekoon has documented his experiences in school Cricket, club Cricket, and National Cricket in a manner that is personal and striking and always with a touch of humour. Mr. Tennekoon is a remarkable Cricketer and human being and it has been my privilege to know him. He has a vast store of knowledge to share. In his autobiography he captures significant moments in his cricketing life that not only shapes his character and outlook, but then went onto influence many a cricketer. it is a wonderful book and holds inside many moments of joy for the reader.*

His chronicler Rohan Wijesinghe wrote: *"Dainty elegance on the field, unassailable dignity off it. Winning was fine but losing gracefully was even finer – that's Anura Tennekoon for you. He epitomises the very spirit of cricket. Anura – a cricketer and a gentleman in the widest sense of the phrase – is a class act by any yardstick indeed, from his thoroughbred walk to his unbridled charm and exquisite stick work at the crease".*

Anura's legacy lives on - a T20 Triangular Cricket Tournament between Royal, Trinity and S. Thomas' was played for the Anura Tennekoon Trophy as part of the Centenary Celebrations of the Big Club Grounds this year.

He married Nelun Ramanayake, an Attorney at Law on 6 June 1974 and his marriage took a place just a year before he took the captainship to lead Sri Lanka at international level and subsequently led Sri Lanka at their first Cricket World Cup tournament. Both Anura and Nelun celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on 6 June 2024 with a religious service attended by his family members in a special ceremony to mark the occasion.

Anura thank you for your immense and selfless contribution to our country through the game of Cricket. We wish you light in your twilight years, the same light you shone on us from the centre in your many years as a Cricketer.

Editor's Note: *This article was compiled from a series of past publications and wish to thank those contributors for the same.*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Being Married to a Thomian

"Thomians Hunt in Packs; Never Alone"

My journey through life with my Thomian began with this hunt. In an era when mobile phones, SMS, e-mails and Facebook were unheard of, the hunt was indeed a difficult task. Therefore, this hunt was meticulously planned out at a house located right opposite Bishop's College (whoever designed it, bless his dear departed soul, certainly had the best interest of young Thomians in mind for it has a large balcony overlooking the grounds of Bishop's College).

Date of the Hunt: 31st October 1981Venue: Food Fair, Bishop's College.

To cut a long story short, my knight in his shining armour descended on the fair grounds with hispack and, at the end of the day, it was a time for rejoice for one, drowning of sorrows down Nippon Way for another, and a long sprint towards the murky waters of the Beria for yet another! This pack needs special mention – *Sleepy*, *The Centenary Legend*, *The Kink* a.k.a *NGO Type* and *Obelix*, for they have always been beside my Thomian and I from our early days of loitering at bus halts in the scorching sun, gallons of lime juice at Cream House, every cinema in Colombo, Big Matches, Fun Fairs and parties to this day, through good times and bad. In fact, these guys persuaded me to contribute my memoirs to be published in the Souvenir, which commemorates half a century of their existence (very brave, I should say, given all that I could divulge).

My courtship with my Thomian was near perfection, he being the most attentive and gallant boyfriend, romancing me with flowers, love letters, cards and gifts; so much so that when I decided to marry him, I thought my life was to be one long fairy tale romance. Mistake #1: The metamorphosis from Romantic Boyfriend to typical Thomian Husband is so speedy, I doubt even a chameleon could change its colour that fast (though I'm constantly told by him that I got a better deal than most!).

Then I thought I could pick any day in the calendar for our wedding date and, being the naive fool that I was, I picked the 11th of MARCH! Mistake – I mean – BIG MISTAKE. I should have realized the things to come when on the day of my wedding, I saw male cousins pick pocketing the bridegroom as hat collection and then encountered the bad omen of running into the Thora Cycle Parade near Galle Face. Though our wedding anniversary always fell during the Big Match, it wasn't too bad in the first few years with the pack and the rest of the pals scattered around perusing girls, studies and careers; I had my man to myself.

Then suddenly, they're about to hit 30 and they realize that youth is passing them by; time to get back to College, school boy antics, Big Matches, etc. Frantic phone calls, reviving of batch groups, appointing committee members and organizing the most important stag nights take top priority. This all begins as early as January. A word of advice to all young ladies who have captured Thomian hearts – do not plan anything in the first quarter of the year, OR BE FOREVER DOOMED! The organizing of this stag needs at least a dozen meetings at the SSC where booze flows and discussing the date, venue, food and drinks takes only about an hour and the rest of the night is dedicated to organizing the much anticipated appearance of the *exotic unfeathered types*! In the sheer excitement of this event, the husband forgets there is a wife at home, let alone a wedding anniversary! Sad but true! But it was okay, at least I had him by me at the match even though he and his pals were boozed out of their minds and generally making a public spectacle of themselves. Then, my Thomian hits 40. Suddenly he gets dragged into the organizing committee of the Royal-Thomian, and there ends my wedding anniversary forever! With me safely ensconced in the most boring VIP Enclosure (which reminds me of the A. F. Raymond Funeral Parlour), my duty-conscious hubby struts around SSC proudly wearing his Thora hat and badge, being ever so helpful to every lady he comes across! At the end of the match, he's too tired to stand on his two feet, let alone anything else. No hope of postponed celebrations either – the 50 Over is around the corner, and then the guys *have* to meet up to drink a farewell to all the batch mates who have descended for the Big Match from all corners of the Earth. Come April, wedding anniversaries are long forgotten.

With an important 'un coming around next March I thought enough was enough, so I put my foot down and told my Thomian; "You get out of that organizing committee next year, or it'll be the last wedding anniversary!" Surprise surprise, he says, "I won't get out of the committee, but I give you my word, I'll spend the entire day alone with you." Still naïve and foolish after 25 years, I believed him till I found out that my crafty husband had already done his homework and knew that the next Big Match wouldn't be played on the 11th of March – thus, the promise. Who else but a Thomian husband would be so cunning and clever?

It's no easy task being married to a Thomian. There are cardinal rules to be observed. The first being: S. Thomas' College is sacred, any thing or person associated with it is Divine, and saying a word against the above mentioned is sacrilege. A certain newspaper is banned at home, and a certain fair news editor is regularly lambasted for publishing an exaggerated truth about S. Thomas' College. That's how passionate the love for S. Thomas' College is, and the wife *has* to share that passion whether she likes it or not.

Then there is the rather embarrassing situation that I'm faced with when a male friend is introduced to my husband. The first question he asks is, "Were you at College?" (Thomians have this cool assumption that whoever invented the English language invented the word "College" solely for the school of the good S. Thomas'). While the introduced party tries to fathom which school is being referred to, my hubby realizes that this is no Thomian, and therefore this lesser mortal doesn't deserve his superior attention and wears a totally bored look on his face, and I'm left feeling so embarrassed I wish the world could split open and swallow me up.

A good Thomian wife also needs to be a good actress. This is especially useful when you are required to listen to the same old stories about life at the school by the sea repeated at every Thomian gathering. You have to look amused, amazed, laugh at the correct cue, smile and applaud at every stupid antic. This is rather painful because you've heard it all a thousand times and can repeat it backwards if required. The same goes at outside gatherings where the Thomian husband boasts of heroic deeds and fun had at Mount, little realizing that these things happen at every boys school and they probably had more fun, being in close proximity to all the "happening" girls schools in Colombo.

I also have to live with the knowledge that not only I, but most of the female population, adore my husband. Ladies of all ages, shapes and size; from top corporates to flying types to sales girls, they all love him. I think it's the "Yes Ma'am, No Ma'am, Thanks Ma'am, Three bags full Ma'am" sort of politeness that does it. The neighbouring Keells Super nearly declared a day of mourning when my husband came down with Chicken Pox; that's how sad the girls were of his plight. I realized that this "charm" is taught to Thomians from Kindergarten, and they pass from College being maestros at it, when I see history repeat itself at home where my son charms his way through every female he meets, including certain principals of girls' schools he intrudes while trucking! Amazing!!

Writing of the Chicken Pox episode, ladies, remember way back to when we listened wide eyed to our young Thomian heroes brag about the many battles they got into, bloodied and broken but still fighting to the end till the rivals ran away in mortal fear? How they could take the entire Royal College single handed? Marry a Thomian and you will realize in a few weeks that it's only "Macho Talk". For aren't they the biggest babies when sick? Mine mourns and groans at the slightest ache or pain and is the neediest patient ever, I doubt even Florence Nightingale would have the patience to put up with him.

But having said all that, would I exchange my Thomian husband for any man, king or emperor in the world? NEVER! I am ever grateful for his uniquely Thomian traits of honesty, integrity, faithfulness and loyalty, which in turn has made me too a better person for having being with him and sharing a life with him.

Through my Thomian husband I also inherited the **pack**, the brothers I never had, of whom my husband, children and I could always count on. Their families have become our closest friends and they have stood by us during the passage of time through all life's joys and sorrows. Thank you, guys!

The Thomian brotherhood is indeed amazing. Every Thomian friend has enriched our lives in some way and I'm very thankful for this bond of friendship. The knowledge that there is always a Thomian out there to lean on is a great strength indeed.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all the wonderful ladies who are married to the Class of '76 when I say we are indeed honoured to be your wives and we wish you love, laughter, good health and a longevity on this special day when you celebrate 50 years of a glorious life!

I am, and always will be proud to be a Thomian Wife.

Shamila Jayasinha
10 July 2015

Tribute to CHRISTOPHER PAUL HERFT

(17 October 1950 - 16 May 2024)

We were young once. Christopher Herft was about the same age as I, give or take a year here or there. Having heard of his encounter with illness, and then for nine months or so to have to confront his actually dying, is more than uncomfortable. Why uncomfortable?

Chris was a guy one began to appreciate as possessing something more than we average blokes did, while in school. Not that he was renowned for athleticism or muscularity and macho moods, in fact, quite the opposite. He demonstrated a sage like calmness and an intellectual awareness, and he floated hither and thither, seemingly in control of the moment, and unruffled by the rudeness and crudity manifest among his fellows. We folk had an awareness of family as well, and I had been informed that his mother was the renowned Doctor Herft, at a time when there were more males in the medical profession who we youngsters seemed to have noted. At Preparatory school in Kollupitiya, in Colombo, I was 'aware' of Herft, and in fact, was, to some extent in awe. I am sure he would be embarrassed at such an admission on my part, but, that was how it was.

When a person has had some impact in the mind and in that process of one's growing up, then to think that such a person as Chris has now slipped away into nothingness, is, to be honest, uncomfortable.

At S. Thomas' College he possibly found that there was some reason to take notice of me and whatever talents that I was supposed to have. He had wit although Chris was no clown, and I was tending more toward the latter scale of reference as a performer, and a tad unrepressed. Nevertheless, Herft was able to endure my company, and there were others of his class group who also meshed and mingled well with myself. Given that Chris was more of the studious type, he was better read than I, and was able to share knowledge and information that went beyond what the average schoolboy knew. In those years, one did not have immediate recourse to seek things out quickly. The library was where one needed to access what one needed to learn. Chris seemed to be knowledgeable and therefore able to offer 'correction' where one emerged with a half-baked notion! In time, Chris was the 'go to person' as regards matters dealing with theatre and performing art. When one ponders, it is rather a strange thing… Chris was not an actor or 'thespian' in the old sense, rather, as I have noted already, he was possessed of a quiet confidence, and he had concepts and a capacity to understand these matters to the degree that they could be implemented in the reality of school-level drama. I do believe he had had some exposure to other serious amateur dramatists in Colombo [Colombo was in reality a very small community in that time, and to find and associate with people of like mind and interests, presented little difficulty], such as with the International Theatre Group (ITG), also CADC (Colombo Amateur Drama Club) and the Colombo Singers, who presented many musicals at venues in Colombo.

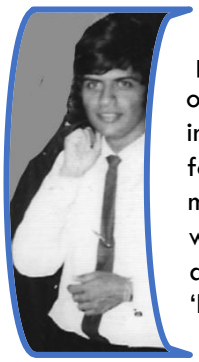
Boys such as I were able to employ whatever capacity we had to interpret words and develop gesture and movement. Herft brought in the professional standard, with which to establish presence on stage and work within the range of space and in accord with the proper practices in movement and decorum in 'stage business'. This made Chris a very fine director, and we were willing to take his instruction without too much protest or question. Chris knew. And that was a good thing to be confident about. Maybe youthful Chris also needed to find out more from others who had other views or suggestions. It is likely he did find out, and therefore we benefited the more.

After our school years, Chris continued to have an impact on theatre in Colombo. The more remarkable, considering that he was also a full time professional in the Ceylon Tea Trade. Despite those weighty responsibilities, Chris devoted much time and energy along with artistic ideas that he brought to fruition on stage. Although the performances in the public space were still considered amateur theatrical productions, the levels of accomplishment seriously approached professional standards.

I marvelled at how able he was! He knew what needed knowing as regards lighting and effects. Under a name he formed for himself in this arena, "Kreeserft", it had resonance, and many were the productions where the

Kreeserft team handled all the backstage stuff. Occasionally, I would join my schoolmate Manilal who was also

part of the team, and spend time in the wings watching, learning and absorbing the mechanics of theatrical production. I certainly am the richer for having been around back stage and in the 'flying system' in those years.



Another area of which I knew precious little but was able to fathom only because of what Chris said and instructed, was the fine-art of 'makeup for theatre'. Not that Chris was a make-up artist, no, but he knew what was correct or otherwise. Even though I do not perform much at this time, those 'lessons learned' remain in mind and heart. I am grateful.

Theatre in Sri Lanka stood to lose, when Chris was seconded for service in the profession that he was, and despatched to Mombasa. We did not see or hear from him or benefit from his considerable experience and expertise for a long while. It was also sad that when his turn of duty in Mombasa was done, he and his dear wife Melanie decided to make a huge change in their lives. They emigrated to Australia.

Chris, then, did what to me was cause for wonderment; he reinvented himself! It takes a brave man to leave behind the baggage of years of accomplishment in the Tea Industry and where he had made a name for himself. [I remember as if yesterday, seeing his photograph as a representative of the Ceylon Tea industry, and placed in the context of an article on the subject in the "Newsweek" magazine!] Chris learned and mastered the technological aspects of the IT industry. He was to be a 'specialist' in the field and a consultant in that area of work. How did he do it

His travels to Sri Lanka were not regular. He did arrange for us to meet on those few occasions. Manilal and I relished those forays, for indeed they were opportunities for us to reflect back and also recall with joy the many things from the past. We spoke with fondness and delight of what David did, and what Richard did not do or chose to pursue instead. About the happy times at the Art Centre Club and the engaging silliness that stamped those gatherings. Aside of those meetings, there were occasions that Chris and I communicated on line and via Facebook. Distance, obviously did not help much in keeping up a vibrant exchange or share in anything substantial that had resonance with either of us. What we did retrieve and relish were the memories. When a whole element of what sustains those memories is gone… then, I feel uncomfortable.

I do sympathise with Melanie and her children. Herft was one helluva act, hard to replace.

Arun Dias Bandaranaike
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New Members of the OBA in 2024

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

Calendar of Events - 2024

February

Friday 9th

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
6.30pm
Waverley Youth Centre
Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley 3149

Friday 23rd

MEMBERS ONLY – NIGHT PARTY
7.30pm
Waverley Youth Centre
Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley 3149

March

Saturday 23rd

ROYAL – THOMIAN CRICKET MATCHES & FAMILY DAY
9.30 am onwards
Max Pawsey Reserve
Fountain Drive, Narre Warren 3805

May

Saturday 4th

MEMBERS LUNCH
12.00 noon
Springvale RSL
26, Osborne Avenue, Springvale, VIC 3171

Saturday 25th

Thomian Family Night
7.00pm
Jan Wilson Community Centre
Halton Road, Noble Park North, VIC 3174

August

Saturday 3rd

Transfiguration Service
10.00 am
St. Adian's Anglican Church
39, Wallarano Drive, Noble Park Vic 3174

October

Saturday 12th

Thomian Ball - 2024
6.30pm
Pullman Melbourne Albert Park
65 Queens Road, Melbourne VIC 3004

November

Tuesday 5th

Melbourne Cup Sweep
2.00pm

December

Saturday 14th

Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols
6.00 pm
Venue: To be confirmed

They remain in our memories forever

Christopher Herft: Was at STCML from 1959 – 1970 and was a college Prefect and was involved in Drama and Literature. Chris directed Drama Society's revival play in 1970 - "Post Horn Gallop". After leaving College he joined Lipton Tea and was posted to Mombasa and UK. He also directed "Equus" in 1978, for the International Theatre Group, Colombo. Worked for Lipton Australia briefly and changed his career to I.T. and served as Operations Manager at AXA.

Gamini Marapana: A President's Counsel, Gamini is an Honours Graduate in Law from the University of Peradeniya. He was a Head Prefect at College (Mt. Lavinia), member of the 1st XI Cricket team as a wicket keeper-opening Batsman and was also the Captain of the College 1st XI Hockey Team. He Captained the 1st ever All-Ceylon School's Hockey XI. He was awarded the Victoria Gold Medal for the Best All-Round Student.

Sriyan Jayasekera: Batch of 1959-1972 at STC. Head Prefect 1972. Leader of the Sinhala Debating team. On leaving School was employed at Forbes and Walker Ltd. On retirement from the Company was in charge of their family property. An energetic Thomian who initiated the Prefects Group and organised the first get together in 2010. He also connected with many class groups and was responsible in organising functions for retired school staff with the assistance of many old boys.

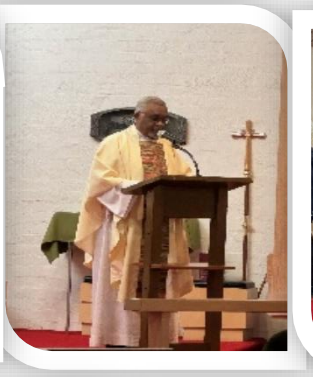
Rukman Senanayake: Product of STCML in 1960s era and was a well-loved Sri Lankan politician following the footsteps of his uncle, the late Dudley Senanayake. He first entered Parliament in 1973 and continued his political career till 2008. He served as the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources from 2002 to 2004; and was the Chairman of the United National Party in 2007.

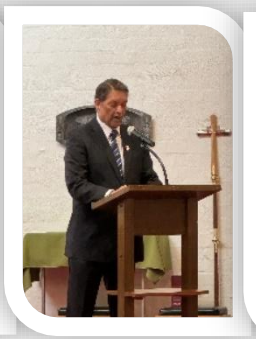
Maurice Ernest Weragoda: Former member of staff at STC Prep from 1967 – 1995. He was the Sectional Head of the Middle School, Group Scout Leader of the 39th Colombo Scout Group and Master in Charge of Rugby Football

Esto Perpetua

PHOTO GALLERY: FAMILY NIGHT (25th May 2024)

PHOTO GALLERY: TRANSFIGURATION SERVICE (3rd August 2024)





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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						
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Given Names						
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Telephone	Home/Work		Mobile			
Email						
College Branch Attended		From		To		
Proposer (Name)		Phone or Email				
Seconder (Name)		Phone or Email				

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

2	Membership Renewal / Change of Address				
Membership Renewal		Change of Address		(*tick*)	
Name					
Address					
	State		Postcode		
Telephone	Home/Work		Mobile		
Email					

3	Payment Details					
Membership Fees	*Members: **$25.00**; Full-Time Students & Pensioners Concession: **$10.00***					
Cash/cheque/MO	$…… enclosed (in favour of S Thomas College OBA)					
Bank Transfer	I have credited **STCOBA**'s account online at CBA, Mount Waverley **BSB 063-151, Account No. 1002-9468**, in the sum of $_____ having clearly recorded my name as remitter for identification purposes.					
Credit Card	Visa		*Mastercard*			*(tick)*
	Name on Card					
	Card Number		Exp	……/…..	CVV	
	Cardholder's Signature: ……..					

New Members: Please complete Sections 1 and 3; Existing Members: Please complete Sections 2 and 3

Postal Address and Enquiries	**Membership Secretary** **PO Box 2337, Mount Waverley Vic 3149** Enquiries: Upali (Pancho) Gooneratne Email: fgooneratne@iiec.org Tel: **0449024294**	***Committee Use Only***	
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		Payment Recorded	
		Member Notified	

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