



# THOMIANA

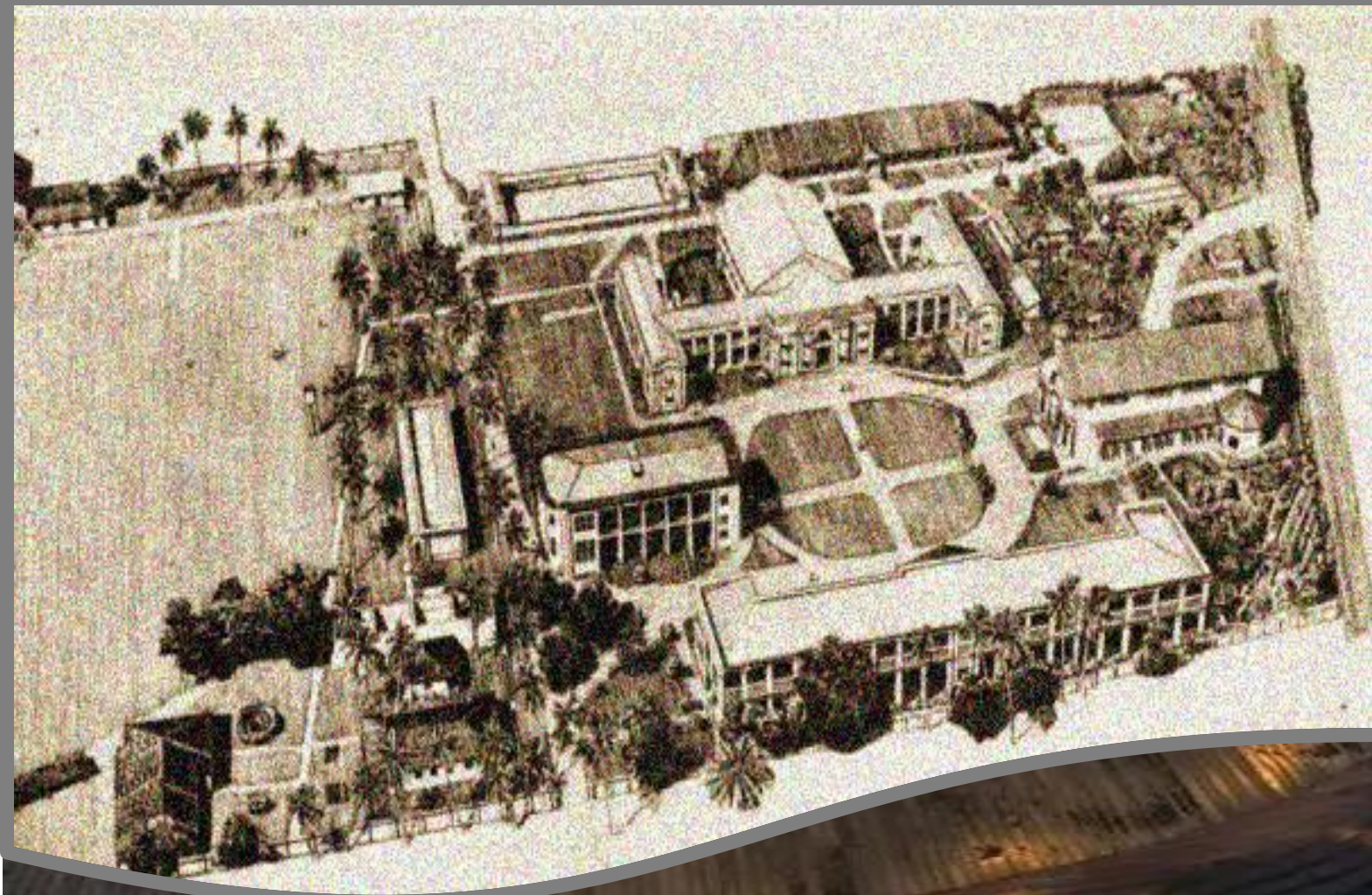


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PO Box 2337. Mt. Waverley, Victoria 3149, Australia



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New  
Year*





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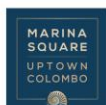
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## S. THOMAS' COLLEGE OLD BOYS ASSOCIATION - AUSTRALIA BRANCH (STCOBA)



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,

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

Since the publication of our last edition of the *Thomiana*, the Association has successfully hosted two major events on last year's calendar.

Our **Thomian Social**, held on 14 November at the Burgher Association in Clayton, provided a wonderful opportunity for our members, their families, and friends to reconnect in a relaxed semi-formal setting. With over 130 attendees, lively entertainment by DJ Rush, and dinner catered by the Springvale RSL team, the evening was a resounding success. It was heartening to see multiple generations of Thomians enjoying themselves, with dancing and camaraderie continuing well past midnight. Thank you to everyone who attended and to those who assisted with the post-event clean-up.

We also held our **Annual Carol Service** on 13 December at St Peter's Anglican Church, Murrumbena. Under the leadership of our choir master, Felix Bartholomeusz, our dedicated choristers and musicians delivered a beautifully curated program that kept the congregation fully engaged. Our sincere thanks go to Felix and his team for their outstanding performance, and to Bishop Keerthisiri Fernando, Rev. Marc Billimoria, Rev. Gerald Loos, and Rev. Malinda De Mel for conducting the service with grace and reverence. This year's service drew over 100 attendees, and through the collection we were able to donate Rs. 125,000 to the Ceylon School for the Deaf & Blind. Following the service, attendees enjoyed a warm time of fellowship with refreshments generously provided by members of the Executive Committee. Thank you once again for your continued support and generosity.

In November, severe flooding in Sri Lanka left many communities in distress. Responding swiftly, the STCOBA Mount Lavinia launched a flood-relief initiative. Thanks to the generosity of our members—and many non-members—we were able to contribute over AUD 5,000 (more than Rs. 1,000,000) at very short notice. Several individuals also made significant personal donations. We extend special appreciation to Past President Jarit De Mel for coordinating with the Past Presidents and Well-Wishers Group to raise a substantial additional contribution. My heartfelt thanks to all who stepped forward to support our fellow Sri Lankans during this difficult time. It is pleasing to report that a total of A\$14,835 (Rs 3,052,000) has been donated by the Melbourne OBA, for various causes in Sri Lanka during 2024-2025.

Looking ahead, the Royal-Thomian Big Match: Melbourne Edition is scheduled for 26 January 2026, followed by an after-party. We are also eagerly anticipating the 175th anniversary of our alma mater, with celebrations planned for 7 February 2026. More information of these events will be communicated in due course.

**Esto Perpetua.**

Sincerely,

**Neomal Jasinghe**



## EDITORIAL



*"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible."*

Another year over and a new one has just begun .... A year of special significance celebrating the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our beloved school. On behalf of the Executive Committee (Ex-Co) of the OBA, we express our best wishes for a great New Year to all our readers in Australia and overseas and send all our love and good wishes for an awesome year.

Activities in the last quarter of 2025 included the last three events of the year – Melbourne Cup Draw, Thomian Social and the Carol Service.

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

After much deliberation, the previously called "Podi Natuma" (small dance) was once again included in our calendar of Events. Finalising the name for the event proved quite challenging with alternatives such as Family Night and Thomian Social put into to the mix. Well, the latter prevailed and the last-minute interest resulted in a sell-out crowd. The new venue, Burgher Association Hall, proved to be a tight fit for the capacity crowd. However,

there were no complaints but only accolades for the well organised event.

The final event was the Carol Service held at the same venue as in the previous year - St. Peter's Anglican Church, Murrumbena, with four priests presiding. The performance of the 30+ choir was well appreciated by the record crowd attending the service.

The tropical Cyclone Ditwah which made landfall on 28 November 2025 was considered the country's worst natural disaster since the 2004 tsunami. It was pleasing to see the Thomian fraternity taking decisive action to provide relief for the victims through the JOINT THOMIAN EMERGENCY INITIATIVE. Sincere appreciation to our members in Australia for their generosity.

The 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary falls on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026 and it is understood that a special service would be held at the College Chapel in Mount Lavinia. The OBA in Melbourne has scheduled an event on 7<sup>th</sup> February which include a church service followed by a celebratory luncheon. A significant contingent of old Boys and their families from interstate is expected to attend this event.

The AGM, scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2025, is slightly later than normal due to the 175<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary event taking precedence.

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

The membership of the OBA last year saw the addition of 42 new members which was significantly higher than the previous year. More than half the new members were from the Thomian Lunch held in May last year.

The generosity of the Thomian fraternity was on full display last year, where around \$14,835 was raised for various causes for our alma mater and national causes. The Sri Lanka Flood Relief Appeal raised around \$5,000 in a matter of weeks and used to provide relief to several villages impacted by cyclone Ditwah.

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

*Upali Gooneratne*  
Editor



## OBA News

### THOMIAN SOCIAL – AN EVENT TO REMEMBER!



This event, re-introduced to the OBA calendar last year, was meant to attract the “younger” members and their families, continues to go from strength to strength, firmly establishing itself as one of the most anticipated events on our calendar. Though the initial response was low, the last-minute surge, saw a gathering of 130+ attendees bringing together families, friends, and fellow Thomians for an evening filled with camaraderie and celebration.

The venue, Burgher Association Hall, had the ideal facilities for both adults and kids in a safe environment. The welcoming, family-friendly atmosphere made it a wonderful occasion for all generations to connect and enjoy each other's

company. The entertainment was a standout feature of the night, with *DJ Rush* delivering an energetic and well-curated set that kept the crowd engaged throughout the evening. Complementing the entertainment was the scrumptious all-you-can-eat buffet, which received glowing praise and quickly became a major talking point among attendees.

A special highlight of the evening was the presence of our former Warden, Revd. Marc Billimoria, whose participation added great meaning to the event. The crowd was delighted when he led fellow Thomians in his signature rendition of *Sweet Caroline*, creating a memorable moment filled with unity, nostalgia, and school spirit. Once again, Thomian Social proved to be a resounding success, reflecting the strong sense of community and togetherness that defines our Thomian family. With the growing enthusiasm and support, we eagerly look forward to hosting an event that will be **even bigger and better in 2026...**

### FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols of STC OBA Melbourne branch was held at St. Peter's Church, Murrumbreena on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at 6 pm. This was the final OBA activity for the year and the Committee was keen to finish well with a grand service. The attendance exceeded our expectations.

The choir comprising of old Thomians and ladies with Thomian connections had weekly practices since early September and concluded with a rehearsal in early December. The Choir was directed by Herbert (Felix) Bartholomeusz and accompanied by the talented organist Ms Theja Tissera.



The service conducted by a team of four priests – The Revd. Marc Billimoria, Revd. Gerald Loos, Revd. Malinda De Mel and the Right Revd. Keerthisiri Fernando (Parish Priest of St. Peter's Church, Murrumbreena). This was the first time that 3 Thomian priests performed the service which follows the same traditional format as STC Mount Lavinia.

The service was followed by light refreshments and the presentation of gifts to the choristers and kids. The collection taken at the service was distributed between St. Peter's Church (in appreciation for the use of the church for the service) and the Deaf and Blind School in Ratmalana, Sri Lanka.

Our appreciation to the organizing committee comprising of Lalindra De Silva and Vasikaran Ratnarajah for coordinating the event.



## ROUND-UP OF DONATIONS TO OUR ALMA MATER AND OTHER CAUSES IN SRI LANKA (2024 – 2025)

On reflection, the generosity of the Thomian fraternity, in responding to various requests for assistance, was evident during the last year. Our records show that a total of **A\$14,835 (Rs.3,052,200)** has been channeled through the Old Boys Association in Melbourne during 2024 – 2025. This is by far the highest contribution made through the OBA in recent years. A summary of the relevant events is given below:

**Lower School Library Project:** This project, which commenced in 2024, included the refurbishment of the library with modern furniture, improved lighting and specially designed reading areas. As reported in the last Thomiana (September 2025) the project was completed in May 2025 at a cost of **A\$5,780 (Rs 1,107,200)** utilising the proceeds from the Annual Thomian Ball and the generosity of advertisers and well-wishers.

**Bishop Chapman Scholarship Fund:** Donations made by the Australia OBA members few years back for the restoration of the gravestone of the late Bishop Chapman, was reallocated with the approval of the donors, to the scholarship fund after the initial purpose did not materialise. Following advice from the Acting Warden and consultation with Mr. Sanjeewa De Mel (STC Counsellor), a sum of **A\$1,800 (Rs 380,000)** was remitted to fund a Science/Maths Scholarship for 2026. This is a merit-based scholarship and cover the annual school fees.

**Mural Restoration at the College Chapel:** Commissioned in 1962 by the Chaplain at the time, the Revd. Canon Roy Yin, the mural of the Transfiguration of Christ in the Chapel was completed by Mr. David Shillingford Paynter in 1968. Ever since, it has held pride of place in the Chapel, a beacon for visitors and worshippers alike. In July 2025, the Acting Warden made an appeal to the Thomian fraternity for funds to help with the restoration of the mural ensuring that this priceless piece of sacred art is preserved for generations to come. Responding to this appeal, the OBA in Melbourne raised **A\$1,660 (Rs.350,000)** through its membership which was transferred in time for the commencement of the work after the Feast of Transfiguration (6 August) and completed in December prior to the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols (7 December). The total cost of the project was estimated at Rs. 4 million.

**Sri Lanka Flood Disaster Relief:** The devastating floods in Sri Lanka in November 2025 have displaced entire communities, caused tragic loss of life, and left families urgently in need of food, clean water, and shelter. The OBAs of S.Thomas' College Mt. Lavinia, Gurutalawa, Bandarawela and the OBU of S. Thomas' Preparatory School established a Joint Thomian Emergency Relief together with the Ironman 4x4 Community Emergency Response Team - Sri Lanka (ICERT). In response, the OBA in Melbourne made an urgent appeal to members, friends, and well-wishers for contributions to support the basic needs of those affected. A donation box was also made available at the Melbourne Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols, held at St Peter's Church, Murrumbidgee, on Saturday, 13th December 2025.

The funds collected amounting to **A\$ 5,040 (Rs.1,090,000)** was channelled to this effort. During the first phase, highly affected areas of Illukkumbura, Puwakpitiya, Pottawala, Rattota, Bambarakiriella, Bamabaragala and Welangahawatta was targeted with over 100 families receiving aid through this initiative.



The next phase of the initiative focused on donating stationary items to school children in these areas.

**Donation to the Ceylon School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB):** As in the past, 50% of the collection at the Carol Service was sent to the CSDB. This year the donation amounted to **A\$555 (Rs 125,000)** which has been the highest in recent years


On behalf of the Committee, we extend our sincere thanks to all members and well-wishers for their continued generosity and support. Your contributions have made a meaningful difference to many lives and have further strengthened our connection with our Alma Mater.

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## Forthcoming Events

### CELEBRATION OF THE 175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF STC

**Celebration of the  
175th Anniversary  
of S. Thomas' College**



**Join the STC OBA Melbourne as we commemorate  
175 years of excellence of our beloved Alma Mater!**


**Date:** 7th February 2026 **Time:** 10.00AM  
**Venue:** St. Oswalds Anglican Church - 100 High Street, Glen Iris

**Followed by a Celebratory Lunch**

**Venue:** Springvale Reserve Community Function Room - 1A Ericksen St, Springvale  
**Time:** 12pm onwards  
**Cost:** \$35 (Pre-paid by 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb)  
**Drinks:** BYO (Limited Bar Provided)


**RSVP to Lalindra on 0433774962 by 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb**

*Save the date!*



**THOMIAN BALL  
2026**

August 29, 2026  
SOFITEL Melbourne on Collins







## News from Sri Lanka

### CONFIRMATION OF THE WARDEN AND SUB-WARDEN



After acting in their respective positions for a year, it is our pleasure to announce the confirmation of Mr. Asanka Perera and Dr. Radeeka Mendis as Warden and Sub-Warden of S. Thomas' College, Mount Lavinia respectively, with effect from 1 January 2026. Mr. Perera's appointment as the 20<sup>th</sup> Warden and Dr. Mendis as the first female Sub-Warden marks a new chapter in the leadership of our great institution.

Mr. Perera, a distinguished Old Thomian and an electrical engineer qualified in the UK, joined the academic staff at Mount Lavinia in 2012 as teacher of Mathematics and English. In 2016, he was appointed as Sub-Warden, during the tenure of Warden Revd. Marc Billimoria and served in that capacity for nine years, prior to his appointment as Acting Warden in 2025. By all accounts, he has served the College with utmost dedication and integrity; and his appointment as Warden will ensure that the highest values and traditions of the College over the last 175 years would be maintained.

Dr. Mendis's appointment as Sub-Warden is the recognition of the significant role she has played in the College's administration and activities over the years. Her leadership and dedication have been instrumental in maintaining the College's traditions and academic standards, particularly in fostering a positive environment for students.

On behalf of the Executive Committee and the membership of the STCOBA in Melbourne, we extend our heartiest congratulations to Mr. Perera and Dr. Mendis. May continued God's blessings steer our beloved Alma Mater to even greater heights and glory.



## MESSAGE FROM THE OTSC



### The Old Thomians' Swimming Club (OTSC)



The OTSC was established in 1956 having noticed a desire in Old Boys to continue with aquatic sports. At the same time the opportunity was extended to non-Thomians in the vicinity to use the College pool, which at that time was the only swimming pool South of Colombo. The OTSC was formed with the blessings of Dr. R.L. Hayman.

The Club was initially located within the College premises closer to the swimming pool and was later relocated to its present premises. The present clubhouse was constructed during 1997-2000 utilizing donations from members.

The clubhouse underwent several facelifts and today boasts of private lounges for meetings and private parties, open areas within an inviting ambiance and a beautiful outdoor area. A dedicated Chef preparing your all time favorites and active bar staff operating the 'Horseshoe Bar' which the OTSC is renowned for.

During its 70 years journey, OTSC has advanced in many ways, not only providing a platform of continuing aquatic sports at club level, but advancing onto lifesaving, cricket and a fully functional clubhouse to gather and reminiscence of the good old days.



The OTSC Tent at the annual Royal Thomian, happens to be one of the most sought-after tents known to be the second oldest tent at the big match after the Mustangs tent. It has the best view of the match from the SLC Upper Grandstand with a capacity of almost 600 seats. The OTSC Tent not only provides a 'birds eye view' of the encounter, it also has the best of entertainment and a full sized 'papare' on all three days, mouthwatering 'bar food' is done live, which again is unique at the match. There will be no shortage of 'Liquid' – guaranteed! Being an all Thomian tent, it certainly is an envy to others when a full crowd starts cheering the Thomians.

The OTSC is administered by a committee appointed every year. The present President Mr. Darshana Herat-Guneratne is at the helm right now with an able committee consisting of well experienced members young and old from different walks of life.

You are warmly welcome to savor '70 years of Brotherhood' in 2026 when the college celebrates 175 years.





## HOW SCHOOL SPORTS BECAME THE SECULAR RELIGION OF SRI LANKA'S MIDDLE CLASS



### ***A Peculiar Inheritance from Her Majesty's Missionaries***

Some musings require the alignment of stars, the recession of tides, the simultaneous blossoming of the Nā tree and the Sal, a favourable position of Jupiter in one's horoscope, and a dozen other auspicious portents before they can even be whispered. And even then, with the cosmos properly arranged and the omens meticulously read, only fools venture to initiate them. They are not for the faint-hearted, because they invoke the wrath of gods — not those that inhabit the heavens, but mostly self-made deities who check their phones obsessively for cricket scores and whose temples are scattered across capital cities.

We find ourselves in one such cosmically aligned moment now—that narrow, blessed interval between the conclusion of the school rugby season

and school cricket's resurrection. A caesura in the calendar of Sri Lankan school sports, a momentary lull when one might speak of Big Matches and old boys without immediately summoning the fury of men (and yes, women too, equity demands acknowledgment). Egos with the structural strength of spun sugar and the stability of nitro-glycerine might detonate at the gentlest suggestion that perhaps, just perhaps, their obsession with the athletic performances of boys young enough to be their grandsons reveals something rather pathological about the collective soul of Sri Lanka's middle-class.

We are a nation where schoolboys games command larger audiences than professional encounters; rugby matches between teenagers bring capital cities to their knees and the exploits of seventeen or eighteen-year-olds in flannel



whites receive more column inches than international fixtures featuring grown men who've devoted their entire lives to the sport. Surely, this is not mere sporting enthusiasm. Other nations have their school tournaments, their university rivalries and their youthful competitions, but nowhere else — not in England where these games were birthed, not in Australia where they are played with religious zeal and not even in India where they have become a national obsession — has the school match achieved such sublime prominence.

The Royal-Thomian cricket encounter draws twenty-three thousand souls across three days. The Bradby Shield rugby matches regularly attract similar numbers in excess of most international fixtures. These are not enthusiastic parents and dutiful alumni making polite appearances; these are entire generations of Sri Lankans for whom missing the Big Match would constitute a form of cultural apostasy.

Meanwhile, the Sara Trophy — that semi-professional competition featuring cricketers who actually know what they're doing — limps along with the enthusiasm of a funeral procession. Nobody cares, because it lacks the essential ingredient: the social alchemy that transforms sport into status, boys into heroes and matches into conferences of the rich and powerful.

How did this happen? How did a small island develop this spectacular inversion where children's games eclipse adult sport? The answer lies in a spectacular nineteenth-century collision between Victorian moral certitude and Ceylonese social ambition which produced something neither party anticipated but both found indispensable.

#### ***When Character-Building Arrived by Steamship***

The tale begins, as all proper colonial tales must, with the arrival of gentlemen from cold climates. There were, on the one hand, the commercial adventurers and imperial administrators: men of profound moral certainty regarding the superiority of their civilization and an almost pathological deficit of self-awareness regarding their actual motives. And then there were the missionaries — a rather different species altogether, and disproportionately Scottish Progressives, one must note with some interest.

They arrived with their own certainties, to be sure, but of a peculiarly earnest variety. Where the commercial classes saw markets to exploit and the

imperial administration saw subjects to govern, the missionaries — bless their earnest souls — genuinely believed that education might elevate rather than merely subjugate. It's a distinction worth preserving: the difference between men who build schools because educated natives make more efficient clerks, and men who build schools because they actually believe that a Ceylonese boy might be transformed through Latin and cricket into something approaching their idea of a civilized human being. Misguided? Tragically. Paternalistic? Undeniably. But sincere in a way that we still talk about them with unquestioning admiration.

In 1838, J. Brooke Bailey introduced cricket to Colombo Academy. Son of a Church Missionary Society reverend, he was possessed by the conviction that rigorous education (and a thorough flogging) could overcome any deficiency of birth or circumstance. Education then, as now, was administered like medicine — unpleasant but supposedly for one's own improvement. Sport was something the 'boys' indulged between Latin declensions and biblical instruction; a tolerable distraction provided it didn't interfere with more serious pursuits.

The systematic transformation of school sport into a secular religion didn't commence until November 1876, when Ashley Walker arrived at the Colombo Academy. Within two years, Walker had established a College Cricket Club and by 1879, he'd organized Ceylon's first inter-school match between Colombo Academy and S. Thomas' College at Galle Face Green (the ground being where the Taj Samudra stands today). Over the next century and a half, it has become one of the oldest uninterrupted cricket series in the world — a feat of consistency that says much about Sri Lankan priorities.

Rugby came through an improbable channel. Luis Edmund Blaze, a 'local' educator who had studied in Kandy and then in Calcutta, opened 'Boys High School' in Kandy in 1891 (which was renamed Kingswood College seven years later) with eleven pupils and an explicit determination to replicate the English public-school model. Blaze had consumed Thomas Arnold's educational philosophy wholesale, having "eagerly read and remembered" anecdotes of Eton, Harrow, and Winchester until he'd convinced himself that the secret to educational excellence lay not in rote memorization but in organized violence on grass fields. He introduced rugby — basically 30 people





trying to prove they're too tough for helmets, too posh for soccer, and too civilized for cage fighting by chasing an inflated leather egg and calling it a sport instead of a collective mental breakdown — and by 1906 had arranged the first inter-school match between Kingswood — the school he founded — and Trinity College — his own alma mater. That first game ended in a gentleman's draw of six points apiece.

But it was Alexander Garden Fraser at Trinity College who perhaps perfected the alchemy of transforming sports into a pedagogy. Fraser arrived in Kandy in 1904 at the tender age of thirty-one, armed with an apodictic mission. Beneath the surface of his Scottish Presbyterian ethic was a capacity for genuine innovation. Fraser's genius — and here one must acknowledge it was genuine genius — lay in understanding that sports could accomplish what lectures could not. "I believe firmly that the service of Christ Jesus makes men better sportsmen," he wrote, "and that in the East sport is a valuable aid towards making them Christian men." The equation was beautifully circular: Christianity produced superior athletes, athletics produced superior Christians, and both together produced the sort of disciplined men who might staff the ranks of the colonial administration — and in Fraser's estimation — take over the leadership of the nation once the British are no longer around. Cricket, Fraser reasoned, would teach these happy-go-lucky islanders to be strategic and patient, and rugby would make them tough - like Europeans.

### ***Fixing Cricket to be fixed by Cricket***

While the missionaries deployed sports to build Christian character and imperial loyalty, Ceylon's aspiring merchant classes discovered in cricket and rugby something rather more immediately useful. The Radala dominated nobility — that estimable collection of families who'd held hereditary privilege and much of the land and a vassal population that cultivated it — regarded themselves as categorically superior to virtually everyone else. They'd owned the land, administered the regions, married among themselves, and enjoyed the sort of unassailable social position that comes from having the correct surname. When British mercantilism created new pathways to wealth such as arrack renting, graphite mining, cinnamon cultivation, coconut and rubber plantations, families from non-aristocratic castes found themselves accumulating fortunes that

rivalled and then far exceeded those of the traditional elites.

But wealth alone couldn't purchase status. Money might buy estates and carriages and European furniture, but it couldn't erase the stigma of recent commercial origins or the wrong caste markers embedded in one's surname. A Radala gentleman might be land-poor yet socially unassailable. A newly wealthy merchant might own half of Colombo yet remain fundamentally inadmissible to the circles that mattered.

The missionary schools offered an ingenious solution. Admission to a Prestigious school required wealth. Of course, these were fee-levying institutions with boarding facilities and extensive grounds, but once admitted, a boy's origins mattered rather less than his performance in spheres the British valued: examination results, batting averages and tries scored. Elite school attendance conferred a patina of Westernization and civilization that traditional caste hierarchies couldn't provide. And if one's son made the First XI in cricket or the First XV in rugby? Well, that was social status of the highest order.

Eager parents — in those days, as they are now — played their part with characteristic efficiency. They used their money and influence to ensure that their boys made it to the first XI or first XV of a 'prestigious' school and even more money and influence to make sure the inter-school matches their boys played in were widely reported in the newspapers. In an era where Newspapers determined and announced who and what is important and noteworthy in the world, the Ceylon Observer and its Sunday sibling printed team lists with players' full names including those all-important surnames. In a society where surnames immediately announced one's caste status, family background, and social standing, having one's name published as a Royal College opening batsman or S. Thomas' scrum-half constituted public certification of elite status. The match reports weren't merely sports coverage because parents didn't really care whether their boys won or lost a game; they were social registers printed for a status-conscious readership that scrutinized them with the intensity of genealogists inspecting headstones in a cemetery.

The result was predictable: wealthy families jostled, manoeuvred, and quite possibly offered considerations of the sort not discussed in polite



company to secure their sons' admission to elite schools and prominent positions on sports teams. Direct evidence of bribery or threats are elusive of course, because such arrangements tend not to generate paper trails, but the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming. How else to explain the remarkable correlation between family wealth and their boys being selected to play Cricket or Rugby for an elite school? The convenient fact that so many political families and captains of industry had their boys captaining school teams? Or the way political dynasties seemed to produce a disproportionate number of sporting heroes? Sounds uncannily familiar, doesn't it?

### ***The Architecture of an Enduring Obsession***

What emerged from this collision of missionary ideology and merchant ambition was a system of quite extraordinary resilience. The elite schools became incubators of Sri Lankan political and commercial power. For sixty-four years — out of the first seventy-six years since independence — Sri Lanka has been governed by either an Old Thomian, Old Royalist or a spouse or offspring of one. The Sinhalese Sports Club, founded in 1899 by cricketers from these elite schools, counted three Prime Ministers among its presidents: D.S. Senanayake, Sir John Kotelawala and J.R. Jayewardene (who held the position until his death in 1996 while simultaneously serving as Prime Minister and President).

J.R. Jayewardene's trajectory exemplifies this perfectly: Royal College head prefect and rugby captain in 1924, cricket captain in 1925, President of the SSC, President of the Board of Control for Cricket, Prime Minister and Executive President. One progressed through these stations rather like a pilgrim ascending to enlightenment that consists of ministerial portfolios and access to state resources.

Playing sport for an elite school brought not only prestige and recognition but a direct pass to the higher echelons of industry and political power, and access to wealth and political power bought admission to elite schools and prime positions on the team list and batting order in the elite school where one's father and grandfather had found their path to fame and fortune. The generational link to wealth and social status and the aspiration to be part of that closed circuit, wittingly or unwittingly turns these 'Big Matches' into annual festivals of exclusivity and prestige — both real and aspired.

Its a powerful enough force that has made the Royal-Thomian, first played in 1879, survive World Wars I and II, independence, insurrection, civil war, economic crises, and a global pandemic without interruption. The Bradby Shield, inaugurated in 1945, has been contested with only two breaks for insurrection and pandemic. These matches draw crowds that dwarf inter-club competitions not because the cricket or rugby is superior, but because they represent something much more than sport.

They are, in essence, annual confirmations of the social order. Old boys return to both watch and be seen watching their schools compete, bringing their extended families to initiate them into the same traditions and maintain networks that transcend mere childhood nostalgia. Present students also understand that a century scored in the Royal-Thomian or a match-winning kick at goal in the Bradby Shield will be remembered decades hence, creating reputations that outshine anything one may achieve for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile, the inter-club competitions — featuring cricketers and rugby players of superior technical ability, many of whom learned their trade at these same elite schools — attract modest crowds and inspire nothing approaching Big Match hysteria. Why would they? Nobody's marriage prospects ever improved because they scored a fifty for Bloomfield. No old boys' network mobilized around the captain of Ragama CC. The Sunday Observer doesn't print your surname in a context that validates your family's social arrival just because you were selected to play for Sri Lanka. At the conclusion of the school's rugby season, one cannot help but wonder if Shan Althaf still aspires to become the Sri Lanka Rugby captain or if the later — whoever he is — dreams of becoming Shan Althaf!

### ***A Peculiarly Sri Lankan Absurdity***

This extraordinary inversion — where schoolboy sports eclipsed adult athletics in cultural significance — proves remarkably unique to Sri Lanka. England has Eton-Harrow, yes, but that match peaked at 38,000 attendance a century ago and now faces calls for cancellation as an elitist embarrassment. Private schools in Australia maintain vigorous schools' sports that no one hears of or cares about. India's school cricket remains developmental rather than culturally central. South Africa and New Zealand prioritize rugby but no





country other than Sri Lanka elevates school matches above professional fixtures, and it persists because of the enduring importance of school affiliation for social mobility.

### ***The Present Tense of a Colonial Past***

Today, the Royal-Thomian cricket match brings Colombo to a standstill. Schools close Thursday through Saturday. Thousands of students' parade through streets on bicycles the day before the match. Television provides dedicated broadcasts. Corporate sponsors pour millions into productions rivalling professional fixtures. The Bradby Shield draws similar crowds, with international celebrities as guests. These aren't anachronisms; they're living institutions that still determine who's who in both industry and government.

This is the inheritance those Victorian missionaries and Theosophists left us: a sporting culture so thoroughly intertwined with social structures that it survives and continues to flourish long after the empire and religious zeal that created them had retreated. What they have inadvertently left behind is a mechanism for the preservation — if not calcification — of a social order that has proved resilient in the face of subsequent social and political transformations. The schools have remained elite institutions regardless of whether they were controlled by foreign missionaries, nationalist politicians, or contemporary administrators. The Big Matches have retained their prominence both for students and 'old boys' who have perpetuated their privilege under colonial rule, socialist governments, and neoliberal reforms with equal efficiency.

What the missionaries exported as ideology has now become embedded in the core of our identity. Despite decades of educational reforms and the establishment of national schools and central schools in the regions, elite schools in the urban centers of Sri Lanka and their sports programs have provided perhaps the only sure path to the middle class since colonial times to the present day. The paradox is exquisite: a colonial import designed to train imperial administrators has become a vehicle for nationalism, a tool of elite formation that also enabled social mobility, and a British cultural

transplant has become authentically and uniquely Sri Lankan.

And so, men with greying hair congregate each March at the SSC grounds and at the Royal Sports Complex or Palkelele in August, hiring papare bands to bellow the frequently vulgar adaptations of songs from their youth — songs whose adopted lyrics would horrify the missionary educators who established these institutions. We watch schoolboys play and old boys watching with the intensity of Roman senators attending gladiatorial contests, cheering successes with unseemly enthusiasm, hurling abuse when they falter, and screaming at referees with a conviction that should become an international standard for diagnosing the Peter Pan Syndrome. We sing our school songs with more fervour than the national anthem — and with considerably more knowledge about the lyrics. Above all, we go to great lengths to ensure that our children attend the same schools and make the First XI or First XV to secure the social capital that we know matters more than any examination result or professional qualification.

It's all terribly colonial, damningly elitist and embarrassingly absurd, but also undeniably pragmatic. It is after all, how we know ourselves and show ourselves — indisputably — for who and what we are.

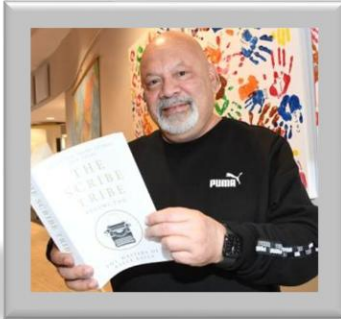


**Harendra Alwis**

*Harendra Alwis is a Melbourne-based technology professional and writer with more than two decades of experience in business and as a freelance writer. Educated at Trinity College Kandy, Deakin University (Computer Science), and The University of Melbourne (International Relations), he writes on technology, society and politics, education and history and has worked as a journalist and columnist at the Sunday Times in Colombo. He is a regular contributor to [Groundviews](https://groundviews.org) and writes in his own Substack (<https://halwis.substack.com/>), which is the original source of the article. Harendra is currently working on his first novel - a work of historical fiction based in early 20th Century Sri Lanka*



## Remembering Rod Grigson - A Man for All Seasons



There is not much known about Rod Grigson's time at College (Mount Lavinia) that was noteworthy, except by his own admission of "being an ordinary student who played cricket and rugby but

not been good at any of them." However, his post-College achievements were beyond his wildest imagination, launching his career at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, followed by being a Senior Executive in a Global IT Company in Melbourne; and finally, after retirement, fulfilling his passion for writing, by establishing his own company, Grigson Publishing in Melbourne.

At the age of 21, Rod was compelled to look for opportunities overseas due to the internal racial conflicts and economic turmoil in Sri Lanka limiting future prospects, compounded by challenging financial constraints. In a recent interview, Rod recalled: *"All my life, I have been able to move forward because someone has helped me. When you have the opportunity, you have to grasp it, you have to move forward yourself, but that initial leg-up is because someone has helped me."* True to his belief, it was a message from a distant cousin living in New York offering a plane ticket for him to fly to the Big Apple that gave him a chance to escape, which proved to be a true sliding doors moment.

Having accepted the offer and looking for employment in New York with a tourist visa provided very limited opportunities. His search for work led him to the UN Headquarters, which coincidentally happened to be hiring at that time; he was whisked into an examination room for a 90-question multiple choice exam that he happened to blitz, resulting in a job offer. Having got his foot in the door, Rod subsequently volunteered and

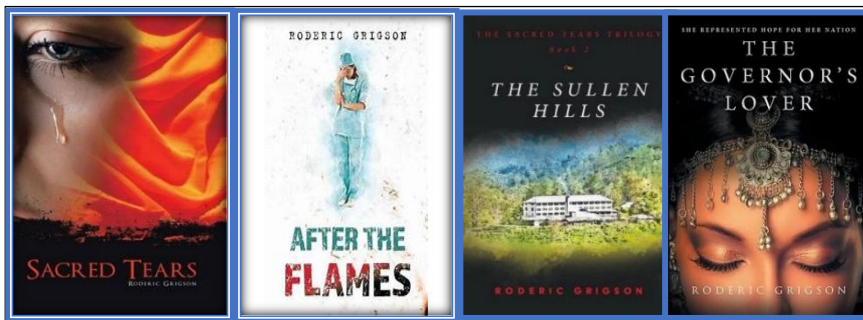
joined the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Egypt and Lebanon, serving on the Suez Canal during the signing of the Israel - Egypt Peace Accord, and in South Lebanon during the Lebanese Civil War. He studied information technology at New York University, and on his return from the Middle East in 1980; after spending two years in the field, he joined the UN Technological Innovations team. He spent the next six years helping develop and implementing office information systems in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese in UN global and regional offices around the world.

Rod migrated with his wife Mena to Australia in 1986 where, over time, he became a senior executive for a global IT company, where he worked for almost 15 years. As the Head of Asia Pacific Channels and Marketing, Rod was responsible for overseeing a vast territory that included the fast-developing markets of China, South Asia and India.

Rod retired from corporate life in 2013 and attended a six-month creative writing course to develop his skills as a writer. His first book 'Sacred Tears' was released in early 2014. His second, 'After the Flames' in 2016, and his third, 'The Sullen Hills' in 2018. He completed his fourth book, 'The Governor's Lover' which he published in late 2022. It was his most ambitious and difficult project, writing about a period in Ceylon's history that shaped the island nation for the next century and a half.

Rod encouraged aspiring writers to develop and gain confidence in sharing their work by running both introductory and advanced creative writing courses at several community centres in the City of Casey in Melbourne. He also facilitated a long-standing writers group known as the 'Scribe Tribe', with whom he worked to publish an anthology of short stories in November 2019, and again in 2021, followed by a third, and final, one in 2025. He presided over his own publishing firm, Grigson Publishing, in Melbourne.

Rod's real contribution to his alma mater began in 1986 when he migrated to Australia. He immediately joined



the STC OBA in Melbourne and volunteered to join the Executive Committee in the following year. With his IT background, he brought new skills to the operations of the OBA, establishing computerised databases, new design formats for the newsletter ('Thomiana') and most importantly professionally designed Dance Souvenirs, which have been the envy of other school Associations. Former OBA President, the late Darley Ingleton, who invited Rod to join the Executive Committee, remarked that Rod was one of the pillars of the OBA – a nice compliment from a former Navy Commander!! Rod served in the Executive Committee for many decades in various positions including Vice President (1994-1995) and Editor; **he** was the recipient of the OBA President's Award in 2020 for his dedicated service. Even in retirement, he continued to support the OBA with sponsorships.



In a recent interview with a community newspaper in Melbourne, Rod shared some of his personal thoughts and memories in a Q&A session. Some of his responses are highlighted below:

Q: Tell us a fun fact about yourself!

A: *I have travelled to over 55 countries so far in my lifetime.*

Q: What do you love about what you do?

A: *There must come a time in your life that you must love what you do, and for me, it has been becoming a published writer after I retired from corporate life. Writing has done more for my life than I could have ever imagined. The truth is that telling stories itself is essentially good and, in many ways, we live for story, and we live through stories. I can't think of many jobs better than telling stories all the time. Writers offer people a glimpse into their own lives and help them live better stories.*

Q: What would your last meal be?

A: *My last meal would be from my childhood, in the country where I was born. There is no better comfort food for me even today than the best possible rendition of a rice and chicken curry meal, cooked in Sri Lankan style accompanied by lots of vegetables and condiments.*

Q: What is your most memorable moment?

A: *Personally, it was climbing the Great Pyramid of Giza when I was stationed in Egypt for the United Nations. Professionally, it was winning Employee of*

*the Year and the President's Award for a multi-national technology company.*

Q: If you had to compete on MasterChef, what dish would you cook?

A: *A Sri Lankan Chicken curry with all the trimmings. I have over the years learnt to cook it very well.*

Q: What were you like as a kid?

A: *I was a bookworm, my love of reading nurtured by my Scottish grandfather. I played cricket and rugby but was not very good at them.*

Q: What's one question that you have always wanted answered?

A: *Are we alone in the Universe? Will we discover life outside of Earth in my lifetime?*

Rod sadly passed away suddenly in September 2025, and an event celebrating his life was held at the Settler's Run Golf and Country Club near his home. The OBA extends its deepest condolences to Rod's wife, Mena and son, Eric.

### Reflections from a friend: Roger Thiedeman

My earliest recollections of Rod Grigson are when he was three or four years my junior at both Prep School and 'Mount'. As such, I didn't really get to know him. But that changed a few decades later after we had separately arrived in Australia. By then Rod was among my brother Michael's circle of friends, so I became acquainted with Rod too.

Our acquaintance developed into friendship via two distinct 'channels'. One was AFL, when Michael and I, both passionate Essendon 'Bombers' fans along with our sons, accompanied equally diehard St. Kilda 'Saints' devotees Rod Grigson, Delwyn and Sandra Lappen, and the Lappen kids, to the footy whenever our respective teams were 'doing battle'.

Then Rod Grigson and I grew closer still when we were Co-Editors of 'Thomiana' in the early 1990s. I looked after the 'words', but Rod shone with his professionally acquired skills and knowledge of the many new aspects of I.T. then coming into common use. Already a dab hand at desktop publishing, he introduced me to the wonderful world wide web of the internet one day, downloading, v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y, and displaying on his home PC monitor a thumbnail video clip, lasting all of 15 or 20 seconds, of a boxing match. To me, who still thought faxing was the greatest invention since the proverbial sliced bread, this was gobsmacking stuff.





When putting together each issue of 'Thomiana', or the Annual Dance Souvenir, Rod and I would meet during our lunch breaks from our respective jobs in the Melbourne CBD, for a preliminary discussion on content. Those chats were invariably conducted at one of Rod's favourite city eateries, the Ong Food Court in Little Bourke Street. As most of us know, Rod was a gourmet of Southeast/South Asian cuisine, with the happy knack of sniffing out even the most obscure, hole-in-the-wall restaurants and takeaway joints that served wholesome fare at economical prices.

A subsequent editorial meeting would take place at Rod's home in Wheelers Hill, but commencing only after he had tucked young Eric into bed while reading to him from a storybook. Rod and I would then begin creating the next edition. We often worked long into the night, even after Mena had popped her head into Rod's study to say good night before retiring too.

A few years later, after the 'Thomiana' gig ended, Rod immersed himself in a new aspect of what evolved into a busy and fulfilling post-retirement life. He decided to become a novelist. When plotting and researching material for what would become his maiden novel, 'Sacred Tears', Rod would regularly float story ideas past me, with requests to fact-check real-life details and other items. These discussions would also take place at a local Asian eatery of his choice, but now situated in and around our home suburbs.

With more well-received novels to his credit, and a lucrative post-retirement career underway as a writer, editor, publisher and creative writing coach, Rod's contact with me, and vice versa, grew less frequent, for a variety of reasons on both sides of the equation. The pandemic had a major part to play too. Yet, we kept in touch by exchanging Christmas greetings each year,

interspersed with the occasional email when some topic of mutual interest or amusement arose.

But in January this year Rod decided to call a halt to the hiatus. He invited me to lunch with him at a 'new' Malaysian restaurant he had discovered in Springvale. Our long-overdue catch-up was most enjoyable, thanks to Rod's always stimulating conversation, and the delectable dishes he recommended. Even more memorable for me was when Rod opened up about his newfound passion for yet another aspect of modern technology: Artificial Intelligence. Already cynical about A.I., I listened politely while Rod enthused, before voicing my scepticism and aversion to knowingly use A.I. for my own writing and editing in the manner that Rod, as he explained, was already embracing it in his work.

After patiently listening to my concerns, Rod chuckled, shook his head and said, "Well, it's the way of the future, mate. You'd better get used to it." I replied, "In that case I hope it's a future I won't be around long enough to experience."

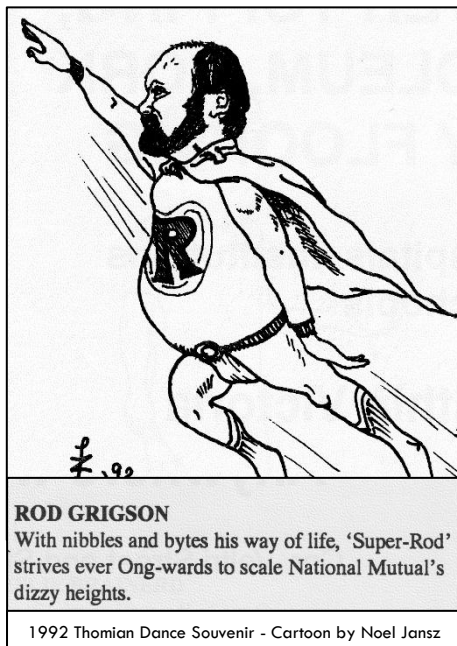
Little did I know then that, of the two of us at that table, it was Rod who wouldn't be around much

longer to work in a largely A.I.-driven world. It was also the last time I spoke to Rod in person.

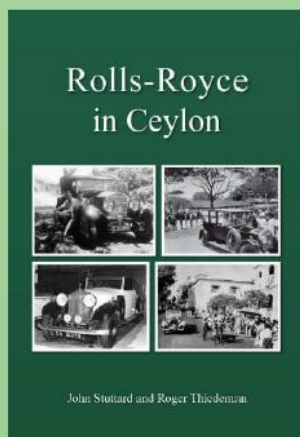
Despite Rod's recent medical and surgical history, as he faced ongoing battles and truces with health issues, his sudden passing in September this year came almost as much of a shock to those of us who knew Rod as a friend, fellow Old Thomian, colleague and mentor, as it did to Mena, Eric and family members. Much has already been said and written by many about Rod's positive impact on their lives in numerous ways. Which leaves me to only add: "Rest in Peace, Rod Grigson. You were taken far too soon – mate."

*"Thank you for leaving us with beautiful memories that will last a lifetime."*

*Editor's Note: Sincere thanks to Roger Thiedeman and other contributors to this article.*



## *Rolls-Royce in Ceylon* by John Stuttard & Roger Thiedeman



*Rolls-Royce in Ceylon*, published by the 20-Ghost Club, UK, is a 180-page book co-authored by Old Thomian **Roger Thiedeman** (STPS 1954-1959; STCML 1960-1967).

This lavishly illustrated volume has been described by independent reviewers as: “sumptuous”; “a fascinating tour of Sri Lanka through the prism of its motoring heritage and affiliation with Rolls-Royce cars in particular”; and “provides a good, succinct history of Sri Lanka too.”

With most if not all of the book’s Ceylon/Sri Lanka content written by Roger, he didn’t lose the opportunity to acquaint readers with his *alma mater* and some of its alumni who were Rolls-Royce owners. See below:

### *S. Thomas’ College, Mt. Lavinia as featured in **Rolls-Royce in Ceylon***



### *Rolls-Royce cars owned by Old Thomians (and a member of the STC Office staff)*



**Lal Rodrigo**



**C.E.A. Dias**

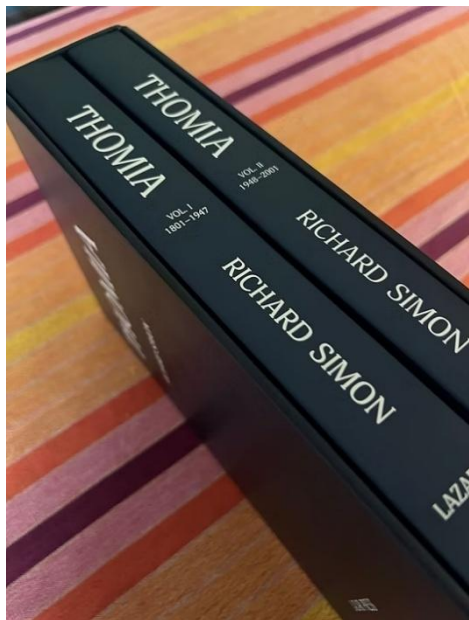


**H.C. Peiris/Jan Prins**

*Rolls-Royce in Ceylon* is priced at £65 or £60 including p&p to Australia or Sri Lanka, respectively. Orders may be placed by emailing [johnstuttard@btinternet.com](mailto:johnstuttard@btinternet.com) who will advise on payment options including PayPal or direct bank transfers.



## ‘Fun to read, fun to write’ – A review of *Thomia* by Rev. Marc Billimoria



The historian A. J. P. Taylor believed that history ‘is fun to write and, I hope, fun to read.’ He also asserted that ‘the original task of the historian is to answer the child’s question: “What happened next?”’ So, for him, the task of the historian was to be a good storyteller. Richard Simon has certainly accomplished this task in his recently published magnum opus, which is titled *Thomia: the entangled histories of modern Lanka & her greatest private school*.

His project, which has taken around ten years to complete, has been nothing less than a labour of love. Yet the author, though a product of the ‘School by the Sea’ himself, has not fallen to the temptation of producing a romanticized, nostalgic account of his *alma mater*. Nor has he succumbed to the impulse to present an idealized picture that glosses over the flaws and failures of the institution – an all too tempting option for historians of institutions such as S. Thomas’ College. Thus, for me, it is both a narrative and a critical historical study, as it not just tells the story of the past but also analyses those stories and critically examines some of their dominant interpretations. He has not been afraid to ask hard questions or to call out some false and bogus narratives, including some that for many Thomians have become gospel truths.

However, this is not a revisionist history. Simon does not engage in deconstructing and demythologizing for the sake of doing so. He gives a description of the first 150 years of STC ‘warts and all’ – some warts exposed in a work of this nature for the first time, perhaps! – but this is exactly why the story is ‘fun to read’; as much as I am sure it was fun to write.

The biographical details of some of the primary characters, including the revered founder himself and some of the early wardens, are very revealing and incisive. They help the reader to realize what challenges and obstacles the early pioneers of the school had to endure as they laid the foundations of what has become one of Sri Lanka’s leading educational institutions over the past 175 years. I particularly enjoyed, for example, reading about that most shadowy of the early wardens, the Reverend George Bennett, an almost mysterious figure who has thus far received very little attention in either C. H. Christian David’s history of the College, written in 1894, or W. T. Keble’s masterpiece of 1937. Bennett is the only warden, for instance, of whom there is no photographic record of any kind to be found in any extant source.

What makes Richard Simon’s book stand out even further among similar school histories is that it is a history of the school set within the wider context of Sri Lanka itself. Thus, as the story of the school unfolds, so does the amazing tale of our island nation as it evolves from Ceylon (Crown Colony in 1802 and independent Dominion in 1948) to Sri Lanka (Republic in 1972 and Democratic Socialist Republic in 1978). It also shows how the College and indeed the Anglican church negotiated their place in the national fabric in the face of emergent linguistic and ethno-religious nationalism on the one hand, and the stark socio-economic realities of the postcolonial era on the other.

I conclude by adding my deep appreciation to Richard Simon for having produced this important contribution to the chronicled history of S. Thomas’ College, Mount Lavinia. Anyone reading this unique history of the ‘School by the Sea’ in its 175th year of existence will not be disappointed.

To order the *Thomia*, please click <https://www.thomia.com/hhy>

*Rev. Marc Billimoria was Warden of S. Thomas’ College, Mount Lavinia, from 2014 to 2025. He is the author of 100 Years at Mount, a detailed record of the College for the years 1918–2018.*





## A Practical Tamil Class to Remember

The morning session dragged endlessly along as it normally does. We reached the period prior to the Lunch Interval with only the practical Tamil class to endure, before a solid, if uninspiring, meal of Kankun, Pol Sambol, rice and if you were lucky and early enough, stragglers, that called themselves meat pieces in the dish of meat curry, to look forward to.

Practical Tamil class was always eagerly anticipated as a class where one relaxed – no man eaters here – Mr. Sachithananthan was the Master and no mild and gentler soul existed. This then was the time to soothe one's mind and rest one's weary body after the traumas and stress of having encountered Mr. Mandawala, Mr. Karalakulasingham and Mr. Asirwatham beforehand. Negotiating them successfully after all, deserved a R&R period and Practical Tamil met this need.

This particular day was even more special as Sami (Sami Yousoof) had brought his new Air Pistol to school, and whilst poor Satchi droned on and on in nasal undertones, expanding on the various pronunciations, occasionally filling the blackboard with the basics of the language, we lovingly admired the gun and held it as if it were a newborn baby, marveling at its fine workmanship. However, just holding on to it and looking at it would not suffice. This was never going to be enough. What use was a gun, if one could only look at it and not fire it? Fate, in the form of a *Kondaya*, alighted on a tree just outside the class, next to the window where our bench was, started hopping around the branches, I knew what I had to do – it was decreed.

Quick as a flash, pellets were obtained from Sami and I loaded up the gun. The window by our bench needed urgent attention, and had to be looked at, this was my cover from Satchi and this needed expert timing & positioning. One eye on Satchi, one on the *Kondaya*, all the time attending to the dysfunctional window. I fired once, fired again, it was all getting a bit too much. I only had two hands and two eyes; I urgently needed an extra pair of eyes! Loading up after each shot was murder. This pesky bird was proving to be a handful and the fact that it was hopping from branch to branch was not helping. However, I was not about to give in. All my primal instincts had been aroused; nothing less than a kill would do. I had lost count of the shots I had fired, was it eight or was it nine and yet this puny creature continued to defy me.

It was just then that the *Kondaya* finally settled on a branch. I remember taking good aim for what I was sure would be the fatal shot when I felt my ear being torn out of my skull. Turning around from the window I came face to face with a livid, enraged Warden Selvaratnam. Eyeballs popping, he screamed at me "What are you doing you wretched boy!" All the time his vice like grip on my ear was never relinquished. I was now the prey the difference being I could not fly away. What I had not realized and here my counter intelligence let me down, was that the Warden taught Latin in the adjacent class and his window was almost parallel to the one I was firing out of. By the time my third or fourth shot had been expelled from the gun he had traced where the sounds were coming from and was well on his way to locating the perpetrator.

He then proceeded to give Satchi a look of disdain and marched us both gun and all to his office at Thalassa. He had by now gleaned that the gun belonged to Sami and also relieved me of its possession. It was one of the most painful walks I have ever endured as he never once released his hold on my ear and we had to suffer his admonishment every step of the way. To add to the misery one of Warden's steps equaled four of mine and if I wanted to keep hold of my ear I just had to keep up with him. I felt utterly miserable, not so much for myself but for my friend Sami and the embarrassment it must have caused Satchi. Having reached the office the scene of many a caning any vague assumption that the long walk may have tempered his rage soon evaporated as he proceeded to give Sami four of the best and followed up by giving me – the chief culprit – seven cuts which can only be put down to frenzy as six was the norm in those days – even for a mortal sin.

We were then marched back to class like recaptured prisoners and sheepishly made to re-enter the fold. Satchi had my undivided attention, at least, for the next few classes. Needless to say, I had lost my appetite and did not eat much for lunch that day.



The whereabouts of the confiscated gun remain a mystery to this day.

*Jeremy Hillman,*

Winchester Miller-Chapman (1959 – 1967)



## SPORTING HEROES OF YESTERYEAR

In this series, which commenced in the September 2023 edition, we aim to highlight the sporting achievements of old Thomians in the fifties and sixties era. In this edition, we have focused on an individual whose academic/professional achievements have far outweighed his extensive sporting achievements at College (Mount Lavinia).



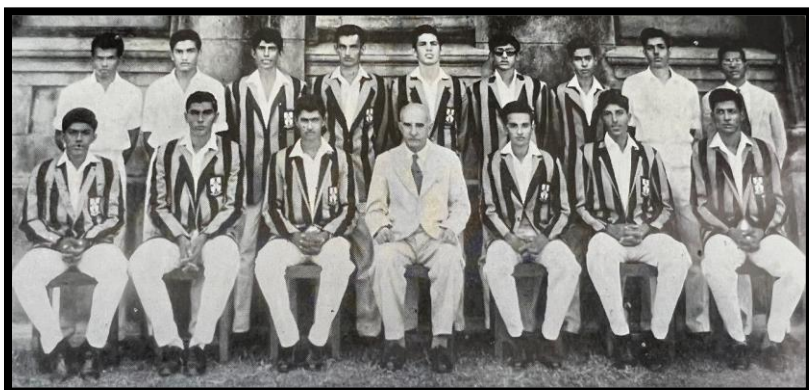
### Dr. Sarath Seneviratne



The name Saratchandra Buddhapriya De Alwis Seneviratne (or S.B De A Seneviratne) may not sound familiar. However, the shortened form, *Sarath Seneviratne*, would resonate with many during the sixties and beyond. Sarath was a full-blooded Thomian, having had his entire primary/secondary schooling at Mount Lavinia (1953 – 1965) and also being a boarder (Winchester, Copleston/Claughton) in the initial years and a day scholar (Buck) in the latter years. In the academic/ professional field, it is fair to say that he excelled more

than the extraordinary sporting achievements.

In the sporting arena, Sarath was an all-rounder in every sense of the word, obtaining College colours in 5 sports while at school, including cricket, rugby, hockey, athletics and fives; and later on, in the academic field gaining entrance to study medicine at the Colombo University. It was in Cricket that Sarath had the biggest impact when he famously scored 96 in a record-breaking partnership with Anura Tennekoon at the Royal-Thomian in 1964 which S. Thomas' won; and again scored 97 in 1965 when he captained the side. He was probably the unluckiest batsman who scored 96 and 97 runs in consecutive Big Matches, missing out on well-deserved centuries. On both occasions, Sarath came in to bat after early collapses on the first morning of the match and the team under immense pressure, and batted with determination, resilience and flair – showcasing the true fighting spirit of cricket. In the national Awards in 1965, STC was adjudged the Best Schoolboy Team and Sarath as the Best Fielder” for his superb out fielding skills. As, Eustace Rulach (famous sportswriter) remarked, *“This Thomian team is the darling of all cricket fans. Wherever they have played, their approach to the game has provided entertaining cricket.”* In the midst of all this, Sarath stood tall, highlighting how academic and sporting prowess could be achieved concurrently.



**1965 1<sup>st</sup> XI Cricket Team**

Standing (L-R): R.F. Mendis, J.D. Bandaranaike, C.L. de Silva, P.S. Seresinhe, O.S. Weerasinghe, J. Rockwood, A.O.C. Kuruppu, T.M. de Silva, Mr. O.A. Abeynaike.

Seated (L-R): S.J. Rajapakse, B.D. Reid, S.B. de A. Seneviratne (Capt.), The Warden (Mr. C.H. Davidson), A.P.B. Tennekoon, H.S.M. Pieris, G. Balasingham



His achievements in Hockey are also noteworthy. In addition to playing for College, Sarath also represented the National team at the 1970 Asian Games in Bangkok and in the Jawaharlal Nehru Hockey Tournament in Agra, India.

After graduating with a medical degree (MBBS) from the University of Ceylon, Sarath came on to the club cricket scene and in 1976, he headed the Sri Lanka Batting averages in the Saravanamuttu (Sara) Trophy. He represented the Sri Lanka Cricket Board XI including captaining against Malaysia. In spite of tremendous batting feats, he was surprisingly overlooked for the national team resulting him shifting focus to his medical career that laid the foundation for some exceptional achievements.

Sarath went to the UK and specialised as an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and subsequently, in 1994, moved to Cayman Islands where he spent the rest of his professional life until his retirement in early 2025. Sarath's primary interests were in Infertility, Cancer Screening, Reconstructive surgery, HRT, Advanced Laparoscopic and Hysteroscopic surgery, and pain relief. His wide experience in this area spanning over 40 years of practice, has made him an expert in this difficult field. His Laparoscopic surgery method earned him Harvard recognition and it was named after him as the "De Alwis Method".

Over the years he has been a great benefactor to the College on many occasions, silently helping out the school in its time of need. The school is in turn proud of his achievements, and always encourages students to further their academic and sporting prowess concurrently as Sarath has proved possible.



Sarath and his wife Rashantha had an extended holiday Down Under in October 2025, catching up with his long-lost friends and relatives. In Melbourne, his old school friends and colleagues organised a special lunch, supported by the STC OBA, with an attendance of around 50.



The event held at the Walawwa Restaurant in Noble Park included a special buffet lunch. Three eminent Old Boys – Godfrey Senaratne, Revd. Marc Billimoria and Barney Reid shared their memories of Sarath's achievements and contributions to his alma mater. Sarath's response was one of gratitude to all the attendees, some of whom he had not met since leaving College.



**Editor's Note:** Sincere thanks to Lakshman De Silva, Arasu Saravanamuttu, Peter Schoorman and Barney Reid for their assistance in coordinating the events in Melbourne.







## 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF STC

*Reflections from an Old Royalist*

### Well done S. Thomas' - Esto Perpetua

By T. D.S. A. Dissanayaka  
Member of the Royal College Class of 1949

In February 2001, S. Thomas' College Mount Lavinia celebrated with great enthusiasm its *One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary*. The celebrations commenced with a poignant Service of Thanksgiving at their Chapel followed by breakfast on the quadrangle, where Thomians young and Thomians old, Thomians staunch and true rally round their College flag.

That in turn was followed by a Special General Assembly and luncheon in the traditional Thomian style of rice, dry beef curry, (the recipe of which is known only unto God and Thomian cooks), pol sambol and parippu. It was truly a splendid beginning for the month-long celebration which included the Thomian Fair, a gala dinner at the Hilton and to culminate with the annual Royal-Thomian Cricket Match to be played later this week.

At the Service of Thanksgiving there were just four Royalists. They were The Right Reverend Kenneth Fernando, Bishop of Colombo of the Church of Ceylon and statutorily the Chairman of the Board of Governors of S. Thomas', The Reverend Duleep De Chickera, a former Sub-Warden and Chaplain, J.P.

Obeyesekera, best known in Thomian quarters as the husband of Siva Obeyesekera who organized yet another Thomian Fair, and myself. We were so moved that we decided to make our own little contribution, from Royal with love!

To those readers who are not familiar with the traditions of these two famous schools, it must be added that those of us at Royal have a special place in our hearts for S. Thomas'. That fondness is only second to our fondness for another school, namely Ladies College! During the twentieth century it was difficult to find a boy at Royal who did not have a special affinity to some nice girl at Ladies College. It is difficult to quantify those platonic relationships, statistically. However statistics do reveal that a staggering one-third of Royalists had opted for wives from Ladies College! That long and unending

list includes both J.P. Obeyesekera and myself!

S. Thomas' can indeed be proud of their numerous achievements from 1851 to 2001. To my mind their greatest achievement is, that with unfailing regularity they have produced real gentlemen. Their second greatest achievement, was that though a Christian School (it was founded by The Right Reverend James Chapman, the first Bishop of Colombo of the Church of England) it has moulded Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians to rise above religious prejudices and to have an abiding love for Mother Lanka. Thirdly, they have produced an unending line of top professionals from every conceivable profession. That endless line is second only to that of just one school!



Considering that S. Thomas' (like Royal) was set up by the British to educate us, shortly after they had conquered us, it is interesting to observe how some Thomians responded to that period of colonial servitude. In 1915 the British executed Captain William Henry Pedris of the Town Guards for treason. A scion of a wealthy family in his last moments he was

handcuffed and tied to a stake. Then a British Major from a Marathi Regiment from Bombay approached him and ripped off his epaulettes, signifying that he was stripped of his commission. When the Major attempted to apply the blindfold he was brushed off with Thomian grit at its best, with Captain Pedris saying defiantly in Latin - *Dulce et decorum pro patria mori est* (It is sweet and glorious to die for my country). Then came the orders "Load" "Aim", "Fire".

That Thomian grit was reflected during World War I when Second-Lieutenant Basil Horsfall of the First Battalion Lancashire Fusiliers was based in France near the border with Belgium. In 1917 the German Army which was embattled at Ypres in Belgium somehow broke through British lines and trapped many Regiments, including the Lancashire Fusiliers. When his Company was facing certain extermination,



Second-Lieutenant Horsfall with total disregard for his own safety knocked out several German machine gun nests. He continued to do so even when he was mortally wounded and bleeding profusely, till a German sniper finally got him. He was posthumously awarded the coveted Victoria Cross, the British decoration for valour, their highest decoration for gallantry the only such medal ever won by a Ceylonese.

Such supreme courage was displayed in 1941 by Pilot Officer Dugal Abeyesekera, the Captain of Cricket in 1940. He was recruited by the Royal Air Force as a Flight Cadet and left for training in the UK, shortly after the Royal-Thomian cricket match of that year. As a wartime measure, he was commissioned as a Pilot Officer after one year of basic training. He was then assigned to a Squadron of Spitfire fighter aircraft and was based just outside London. When the crucial Battle of Britain was fought in 1941, he volunteered for action, although he had inadequate experience for combat. He flew several sorties till his Spitfire was shot down. His Squadron Leader reported that no parachute ejected from the stricken aircraft. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

That Thomian grit is ever present in the operational areas of our present Civil war, where to-date thirteen Thomians have been killed in action. For example, in 1996 Squadron Leader Thilina Kaluarachchi of the Sri Lanka Air Force repeatedly flew his MI-24 helicopter gunship through a hail of machine gun fire to evacuate our troops who were withdrawn following the battle at Mullaitivu. Already the Army had lost over 1,000 officers and men, the Navy had lost two Dvora gunboats with all crew on board. The Special Forces and Commandos who were brought in from Batticaloa and Minneriya on the orders of Major-General Srilal Weerasooriya RWP, RSP, VSV, USP, later as a Lieutenant General the first Thomian to command our Army, would perhaps have perished if not for the Air Force in general and a squadron of helicopter gunships in particular. Squadron Leader Kaluarachchi was deservedly awarded the Weera Wickrema Vibushana, our second highest decoration for gallantry. In 1997 Mount Lavinia and S. Thomas' wept for Wing-Commander Thilina Kaluarachchi WWV, RWP and bar, RSP and bar, who was killed in action. Honoured as a war hero, both in life and in death, his military funeral was graced by the largest crowd ever seen in Mount Lavinia in living memory.

Since its inception in 1851 S. Thomas' was moulded in the best traditions of liberal education in the West, as was Royal since its inception in 1835. The curriculum was based on that of Eton and Harrow. However, the winds of change were blowing across

the world, though the British were quite oblivious to it. To them the sun never set on the British Empire. Our patriots looked at the world differently. For example, a rebellious but truthful youngster named David Hewavitarne at S. Thomas' was giving Warden Miller a rough time. In his wisdom his father moved him to a better school, where his younger brother Charles Hewavitarne, was developing quite a reputation as a scholar. It was rather unfortunate that young David Hewavitarne continued his rebellious activities unmindful of the Royal College motto "Disce Aut Discede" (Learn or Depart). He also had some minor vices such as smoking. Just once he got caught, was given a public caning and expelled. The experience was so traumatic, that it cured him of all minor vices for all time. In adult life David Hewavitarne was the personification of rectitude. As Anagarika Dharmapala, he became a disciple of Lord Buddha in the true sense of the word and greatly helped to propagate the gospel of The Enlightened One.

Another great Thomian who helped in our cultural renaissance was E. R. de Silva. At S. Thomas' he was a quiet boy not known for scholastic brilliance. However, at the University College in Colombo (later the University of Ceylon and now the University of Colombo) he did brilliantly in Indo-Aryan Languages. He followed it up with a Doctorate from the University of London. In due course Ediriweera Sarathchandra, as he was known in adult life, became a Professor of Sinhala at the University of Peradeniya. More importantly, he produced the magnificent ballet "Maname" in 1957. It had packed houses throughout the nation for over fifteen years, till he left for France as our Ambassador.

Thomian grit was a conspicuous feature when D.R. Wijewardene, N. K. Choksy Q.C., Jabir A. Cader and Dr. Sam De Vos made their pioneering ventures into the field of commerce. D.R. Wijewardene had perceived, during his days at Cambridge, that Ceylon had to have her own newspapers in her quest for Independence. Accordingly in 1917 he set up the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Limited (ANCL) which in a little over a decade eclipsed the British-owned "Times of Ceylon". Initially he encountered stiff

resistance from British commercial interests who refused to advertise in his newspapers. Consequently "The Ceylon Daily News" ran at a loss for a number of years, notwithstanding the fact that it outsold "The Morning Leader". Sheer tenacity on the part of D. R. Wijewardene, who was primarily a patriot kept ANCL solvent. Then by the end of the nineteen twenties "The Ceylon Daily News" even outsold the British owned evening



newspaper "The Times". It was only then that the British commercial interests made a virtue out of necessity and began advertising in "The Ceylon Daily News." Thereafter in life and in death D.R. Wijewardene was looked upon as the greatest entrepreneur Ceylon had produced in the twentieth century. That was till the advent of his brother's son Upali Wijewardene, my classmate at Royal College. N. K. Choksy made a fortune at the Bar and thereafter invested his wealth wisely in the manufacture of garments, then in its incipient stage of evolution. He chose an industry which the ladies refer to rather naughtily as the upliftment of the fallen. It is otherwise known as the manufacture of brassieres. Jabir A. Cader was a pioneer in the cinemas, initially with the New Olympia and then a chain including the Liberty. Sam

De Vos made his fortune with Departmental Stores, initially in Galle and then expanding to Colombo and Kandy.

Well done ...

There is only one visible difference between Royalists and Thomians. At Royal the motto is 'Disce Aut Discede.' Accordingly, during the twentieth century well over a half of students from Royal entered Universities. The corresponding average for S. Thomas' is well below a quarter. Notwithstanding those considerations, S. Thomas' has produced some truly brilliant scholars. For example, Ronnie de Mel came first in every public examination held in Ceylon, in his time. In 1947 he took a brilliant First in History at the University of Ceylon and was awarded a scholarship to Cambridge University. In 1948, he was placed first in the competitive examination to join the then prestigious and now defunct Ceylon Civil Service. In more recent years Professor G. L. Pieris won even more prizes than Ronnie de Mel, took a First from the University of Ceylon in Law, a Doctorate from Oxford, a scholarship to Harvard, became a Professor at the University of Ceylon at 34 years of age and Vice-Chancellor at 42 years of age. Somehow both abandoned their chosen careers for the lure of politics. Only time will show whether that was wisdom or folly.

Many a brilliant scholar from S. Thomas' became a permanent member of the academia. None played that role so well as Professor P. P. G. L. Siriwardene, the last Vice Chancellor of the University of Sri Lanka. Those who had the privilege of studying Chemistry under him, Sub- Warden D. A. Pakianathan and I are two of his many grateful pupils, revere him as the very personification of a gentleman replete with a golden brain and a heart of gold.



That Thomian grit was reflected even in the performance of their scholars. In 1942, S. Thomas' was evicted from their premises at Mount Lavinia as a wartime measure, to make way for a Military Hospital. Amazingly those who entered the University of Ceylon in 1942 and in 1943 were perhaps their most brilliant batches. They included Ronnie De Mel and five others who joined the Ceylon Civil Service, Professor P.P.G.L. Siriwardene and four famous Professors including Stanley Kalpage.

It is commonplace for those at Royal to combine studies with sports. Indeed, those who scored centuries in the Royal-Thomian or scored tries in the Bradby Shield matches with Trinity College or broke records in the Public Schools Athletics Meet were shown the way to go home, when they did not pass their examinations. Our motto "Disce Aut Discede" is enforced ruthlessly, to say the least. On the other hand, the concept of 'mens sane in corpore sano' (a healthy mind in a healthy body) is uncommon at S. Thomas. However, the glorious exceptions include Osmund De Silva who in his undergraduate years at the University College broke more Ceylon records in Athletics than even Duncan White and later rose to be Inspector-General of Police and A. J. D. N. Selvadurai who as an undergraduate represented Ceylon in three sports, Athletics, Cricket and Tennis. That was way back in the nineteen twenties. Since then, S. J. Thambiah, Captain of Cricket in 1948, Head Prefect and winner of the Victoria Gold Medal, entered the University of Ceylon on a scholarship, took a First in Sociology, a Doctorate from Oxford and is now a Professor at Harvard. P.T. Shantikumar, Captain of Cricket in 1949 came first in the Ceylon Civil Service examination in 1954, P.I. Pieris, Captain of Cricket in 1953 and a Cambridge Blue, who represented Ceylon for many years after his return to the Island, Rupert Ferdinands was Captain of our Davies Cup Team when he was still an undergraduate of the University of Ceylon in the early nineteen sixties and Mano Ponniah who represented Ceylon in Cricket during his years as an undergraduate of the

University of Peradeniya and later won his Blue at Cambridge. In more recent years, Geffary Dulapandan Captained the Sri Lanka team in Swimming while an undergraduate at the University of Colombo.

The calibre of a school is often determined by its Principal and Staff. S. Thomas' was singularly fortunate to have been headed by educationists of the high calibre of Warden W.A. Stone and his pupil Warden R.S. de Saram for fifty-of its one hundred and fifty years. They moulded their students as they deemed fit, in the best traditions



of the British public school system. They never spared the rod to spoil the child and terrified successive generations of Thomians. On the other hand, they concealed a genuine fondness for their pupils. The parable of the lost sheep as enunciated by Jesus Christ was deeply embedded in their thinking. So was the concept that a Resurrection can come only after a Crucifixion. They have now returned to their Maker but their spirit lives beyond the grave, in the hearts and minds of thousands of grateful Thomians staunch and true.

By the same token S. Thomas' has been so fortunate by the dedication of their tutorial staff. Teaching has many rewards but none financially. Dedicated teachers are almost an extinct species today in Sri Lanka. It was not so in Ceylon in the years gone by. One of the Rolls of Honour at S. Thomas' are for teachers who have served for twenty-five years or more. That long list includes such famous teachers as The Rev. G. A.H. Arndt, C.H. Christie David, C. V. Pereira. E. O. Pereira, C.R. Wise, O. P. Gunaratne, A. J. Schaffter, Harold Jansz, Miss A. E. Bay. Ruth Anthonisz, V. P. Cooke, The Rev. J. Y. Barnabas, The Rev. Canon A. J. Foster, Dr. R. L. Hayman, C.H. Davidson, S. J. Anandanayagam, D. F. David, B. C.

D'Silva, C. S. Weerasinghe and The Rev. Canon Roy Boyer Yin amongst others. Regrettably that long list narrows down appreciably sometime after our Independence. Unfortunately, Royal College suffers from the same affliction, which imperils the moulding of character which is even more important than the imparting of knowledge.

The moulding of character at school can be achieved basically in the classroom and on the playing fields. S. Thomas' can be proud of the sportsmen they have moulded based on the theme:

*"When the One Great Scorer comes  
To write against your name,  
He writes not whether you won or lost  
But how you played the game."*

Vernon Prins, Michael Tissera, Anura Tennekoon and Duleep Mendis were famous Captains of Cricket at S. Thomas' who went on to Captain the Ceylon/Sri Lanka team. To those who have the privilege of knowing them personally, as I do, they have surpassed their capacity to excel in cricket with their immeasurable capacity to be the personification of gentlemen, both on and off the field. No commentary on Cricket at S. Thomas' is complete without reference to Thomian grit in the context of the Centenary Match of the Royal-Thomian. The Thomian wickets were falling like ninepins on the last day and the match was expected to be over before tea. Then Mahinda Halangoda and C P.

Richards were associated in a 91 run unbroken partnership for the ninth wicket. Many Thomians still say *"Never in our history have so many owed so much to so few."*

Tragically S. Thomas' like Royal has produced a string of Heads of Governments who have done much good and much harm to our nation. At the advent of Independence, we were both stable and prosperous. We were the envy of other nations in South-East Asia. Today nobody, except perhaps those of unsound mind, would envy our nation or deem it to be either stable or prosperous. Our Prime Ministers and Presidents, be they from S. Thomas' or Royal or elsewhere, be they from the male or the female of the species, have exhibited one pathetic flaw. They have systematically placed their personal interests and party interests ahead of our national interests. Down the ages and around the world, that has been a certain recipe for chaos and chaos we see all around us. Not surprisingly Sri Lanka has not produced one statesman since Independence. In that sense both S. Thomas' and Royal have also failed the nation. I do hope that deficiency will be set right in this century, and the sooner the better.

There is just one sphere of activity where S. Thomas' has completely eclipsed Royal. The benefactors of S. Thomas' have been truly marvellous. They have stood by the school in dark days and in happier times. With them it has always been,

*"Ask not what S. Thomas' can do for you,  
Ask what you can do for S. Thomas'."*

This article is an attempt to summarize the many virtues and the few infirmities of S. Thomas'. On the balance, the overall performance of this great school has been truly marvellous. That rich heritage must be used wisely to enhance S. Thomas' in this century. Indeed S. Thomas' has made a magnificent start by appointing Dr. David Ajunan Ponniah as the new Warden. As supreme example of 'menssana in corpore sano' he stunned the massive crowd at the Royal - Thomian of 1967 when as a fresher he scored a century. Later that year he sailed into the University of Peradeniya at a young age, much to the relief of Royalists. He did his post-graduate work in the UK and sacrificed a certain Professorship in the years to come, to answer a call of duty by his Alma Mater in its hour of need. A true example of Thomian grit!

Today we live in an open society almost free of indigenous tyranny and have tasted the fruits of an open economy for nearly a quarter of a century. Yet such enlightened thinking has not yet percolated into the field of education. Bureaucratic controls have not



decreased but increased on the private schools. It is so different in India and Pakistan, in Malaysia and Singapore. Sri Lanka must follow those examples and permit magnificent schools like S. Thomas' to blossom to their full potential.

Thomians young and Thomians old, Thomians staunch and true, to those of us at Royal it is truly our privilege to salute you on your one hundred and fiftieth anniversary. May your foundations be not on concrete but on the teachings of Jesus Christ, as they have always been. May you continue to serve Mother Lanka

in the magnificent way you have always done. May you continue to be our friendly rival, as you have always been.

WELL DONE S. THOMAS'

*Esto Perpetua (Be Thou for Ever)*

*Esto Perpetua*

*Esto Perpetua*

*The Blue Black and Blue, for ever!*



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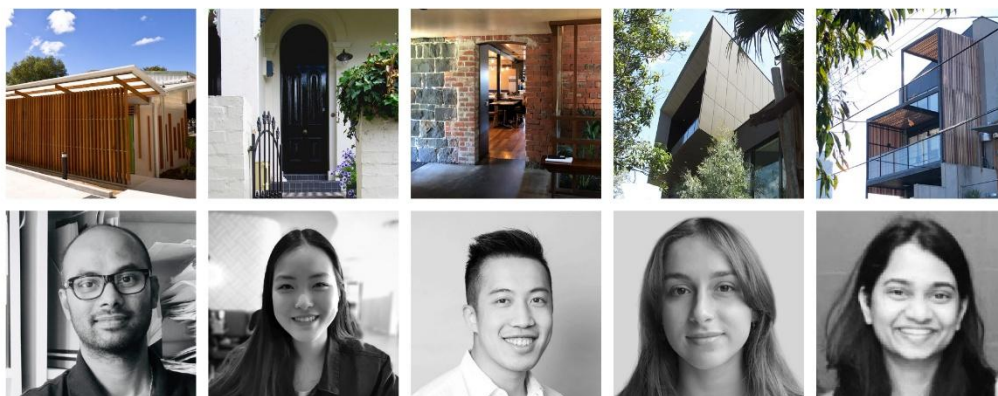
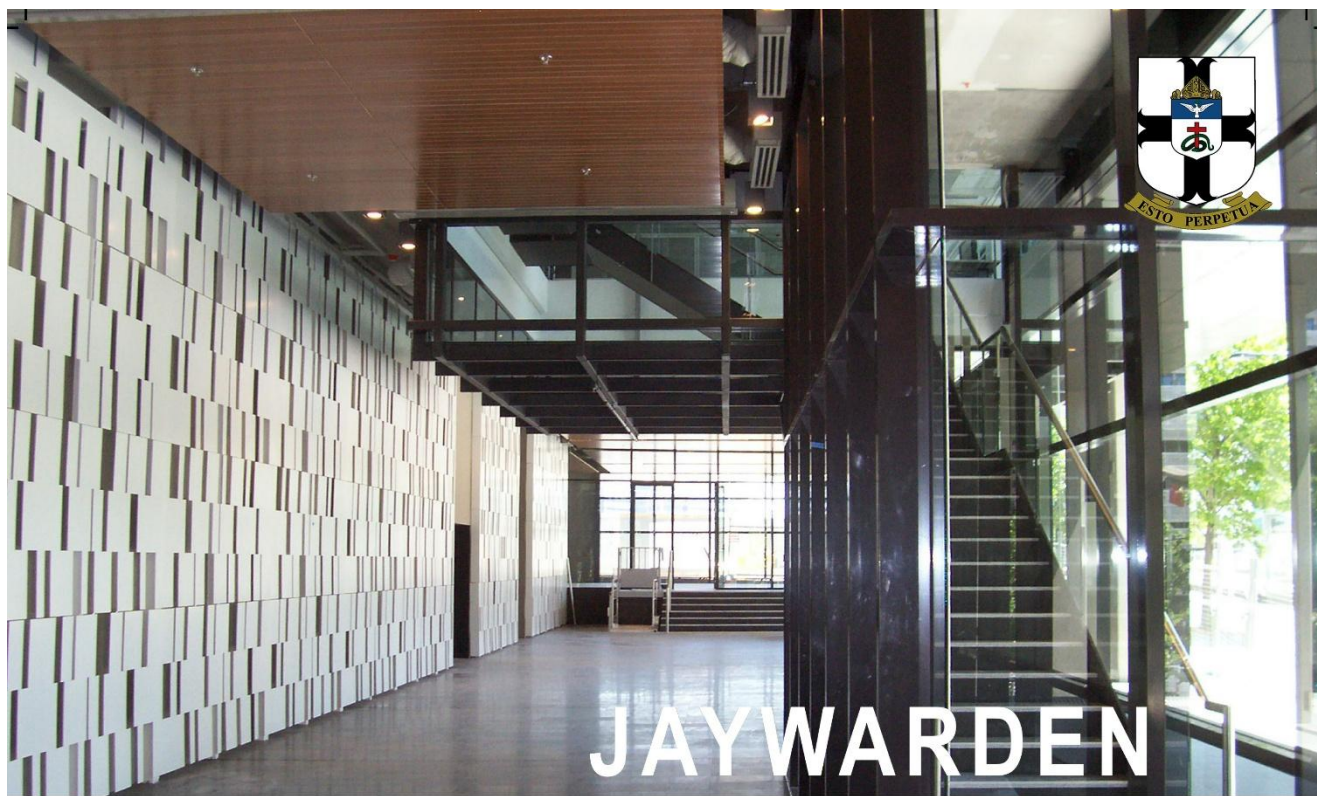
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## IN GOOD OLD CEYLON

*Ms. Therese Nilmini*



*Off to School in red Double Decker.*

*The ride was a must in a CTB bus, One leg on the foot board.  
The other dangling free.*

*Imminent danger*

*Was a mere glee 20 kids plus In a space for three*

*Hung on the silver pole.*

*How many could it hold?*

*Galle Road to Maradana*

*5c half-price ticket.*

*Cost was not so dear*

*Cut school on a lazy Friday,  
Off to the show at 10.30, the **Liberty**,*

*Queued down the street not long to go Braving the sun for ten thirty show,  
ABBA the movie, the latest release in 70mm.*

*The gallery destination please*

*The cheapest seats, a 55c each,*

*Dripping sweat from our chins to our knees*

*Gallery was for the lower class*

*Rs 1.10 for the second class*

*Never could afford the first class*

*ODC was for the upper class*

*Been there free of charge.*

*Once thrown out by security guards*

*Balcony was certainly no go.*

*There was always not enough dough.*





Friend drove a Morris, we'd all pile on in.  
His friend had Ford, a little more space  
Uncle too had a car  
That kept us all fit  
With a "thallu" start to gain more pace.  
Waited for March, big match day  
And the Cycle Parade was before that day  
Collect the money for thosai kade  
And the fun was to ring the College bell before the end of  
school time.

First stop was the belfry, to ring the bell then run like hell,  
laughing all the way.

Then the man in charge shouting and start chasing all  
the way

Meet the girl friend for a chat.  
Holding hands was the most we got.  
Bus halt the preferred place.  
These were the good old days.



Zellers, Knickerbocker Glory and Bambalapitiya flats.  
Perhaps, some of you are too young to appreciate  
this...

You may however ask your parents and they  
would agree.  
When the worst thing you could do at school  
was smoke in  
the bathrooms, fail a test or chew gum.  
And the banquets were in the tuck-shop,  
And we danced to a gramophone later, and all  
the girls wore fluffy pastel gowns,  
And the boys wore 'longs' for the first time,



And we were allowed to stay out and watch a 9.30 PM show at  
the Liberty and the Majestic and the Savoy  
And the biggest thrill was holding hands...!

When a Sunbeam Alpine or an MG was everyone's dream car,  
To cruise, peel out, lay rubber and watch the road races and people went steady.  
It was the greatest weekend to go to  
the Galle Face Hotel's 'Coconut Grove' with the JETLINERS,  
Or The Ceylinco Ball Room with the SPITFIRES  
Or The Little Hut With the AMAZING GRACE



Or The Akasa Kade with Sam the Man! / Sun & Sand  
And no one ever asked where the car keys were 'cause they were  
always in the car, in the ignition, and the doors were never  
locked, and you got into big trouble if you accidentally locked  
the doors at home, since no one ever had a key.  
Remember, lying on your back on the grass with our friends  
and saying things like "That cloud looks like a..."  
Playing cricket with no adults to help kids with the rules of the  
game.

Back then, cricket was not a psychological group learning  
experience - It was a game!

Remember when stuff from the store came without safety caps and hermetic seals 'cause no one had yet  
tried to poison a perfect stranger?

With all our progress... Don't you just wish... Just once.....

You Could slip back in time and savour the slower pace...

And share it with the children of the 80's and 90's...



So, send this on to someone who can still remember;

Bill Haley and the Comets,

The Hardy Boys,

Laurel & Hardy,

Roy Rogers and 'Trigger',

Famous Five,

The Galle Face Green,

The Lone Ranger, Kinross....

The Otters, The Piccadilly at Wellawatte,

'House-dances', Jam Sessions,

Zellers at Bamba,

'The Blue Leopard' and of course Sirisanda.

Bill Forbes and The Jay Cee Shows at Mount Lavinia Hotel

And evenings filled with bike rides,

Playing in cowboy land, and visits to the pool...

The 'Bamba Flats'....

Fish & Chips & Sundaes with that special Chocolate  
sauce at the 'Fountain Cafe.'

Mouth-watering "knicker bocker glory", and the  
jaggery sundae.

Biriyani at Pilawoos, Mayfair..

Lion House ...



When being sent to the principal's office was nothing  
compared to the fate that awaited a misbehaving student at home.\_

Basically, we were in fear for our lives,

But it wasn't because of terrorism'.... drive by shootings,

drugs, gangs, alcohol and road rage...etc.

Our parents and grandparents were a much bigger threat! \_

But we all survived....

Because their love was greater than their threat.

Didn't that make you feel good?

Just to go back and say,

"Yeah, I remember that!" - And was it really that long ago?



A photograph of four professionals (three men and one woman) sitting on a dark leather couch in an office setting. They are all dressed in business attire. The man on the far left is wearing a blue suit and a pink tie. The man in the center is wearing a blue suit and a blue tie. The woman on the right is wearing a black blazer over a blue top. The man on the far right is wearing a dark suit and a red tie. A framed picture is on the wall behind them.

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## OBA Executive Committee – 2025

Title	Name
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Vice Presidents	Peneeth Goonawardena
	Chris Varney
	Lalindra De Silva
Secretary	Saman Liyanage
Treasurer	Shehan Jayetileke
Asst. Treasurer	Milinda Liyanage
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Committee	Vasikaran Ratnarajah
	Mandula Fonseka
	Janaka Dissanayake
	Chariya Kurukulasuriya
	Meshach Lindon

For Inquiries, please email Webmaster STC OBA (Australia): [stcobaust.webmaster@gmail.com](mailto:stcobaust.webmaster@gmail.com)

### New Members of the OBA in 2025

Name	Branch	Period	Name	Branch	Period
Kevin MARTIN	Prep	1963 - 1971	Clarence LEWIS	Mt. Lavinia	
Dushan Navishka YAPA	Mt. Lavinia	2015 - 2022	Dhanushka BASNAYAKE	Mt. Lavinia	
Meshach LINDON	Mt. Lavinia	2008 - 2016	Dulanja DE SILVA	Mt. Lavinia	
Arittha RADDALGODA	Mt. Lavinia	2009 - 2022	Heshan PEIRIS	Mt. Lavinia	
Praveen FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia	2005 - 2018	Chandima RATNAYAKE	Mt. Lavinia	
Lishan DE SILVA	Mt. Lavinia		Sahan WIJESINGHE	Mt. Lavinia	
Rohan GINIGE	Mt. Lavinia	1965 - 1980	Tilak ARUNACHALAM	Mt. Lavinia	1958-1970
Leon WIJERATNE	Mt. Lavinia	1985 - 1998	Hashil PERERA	Mt. Lavinia	2010 - 2023
Ravi DE SILVA	Mt. Lavinia		Senith DELPECHITRA	Mt. Lavinia	2015 - 2023
Sheahan DHASON	Mt. Lavinia	1980 - 1994	Hasitha DHARMASENA	Mt. Lavinia	
Shehan SELVANAYAGAM	Mt. Lavinia		Dusheik TILLEKERATNE	Mt. Lavinia	
Ramal PERERA	Mt. Lavinia		Ahmad MUKHTAR	Mt. Lavinia	2009 - 2022
Anura FERNANDO	Mt. Lavinia		Raneth HETTIYADURA	Mt. Lavinia	2011 - 2024
Palitha PERERA	Mt. Lavinia		Priyan DE MEL	Mt. Lavinia	
Aneesh KAMALCHANDRA	Mt. Lavinia	2009 - 2022	Idris JALEEL	Mt. Lavinia	2007 - 2020
Navishka KARUNARATNE	Mt. Lavinia	2007 - 2020	Revaan TISSERA	Mt. Lavinia	2002 - 2020
Duvin DE MEL	Mt. Lavinia	2003 - 2016	Waruna PEIRIS	Mt. Lavinia	
Damion S MICHAEL	Mt. Lavinia	2011 - 2019	Shaveen RAVINDRAN	Mt. Lavinia	2010 - 2023
Nikil RAVINDRAN	Mt. Lavinia	2012 - 2024	Ravindra GANESHALINGHAM	Prep/ML	1960-1971
Prasanna FERNANDO	Bandarawela	1987 - 2000	Navam Indrajit NILES	Mt. Lavinia	1994 – 2007
Yashvanthan RAVEENDIRAN	Mt. Lavinia		Yohan GUNASEKERA	Mt. Lavinia	1988 - 2001



# Calendar of Events - 2026

## January

**Sunday 26<sup>th</sup>**

**ROYAL – THOMIAN CRICKET MATCHES & AFTER PARTY**

**9.30 am onwards**

Inez Hunter Reserve

451 Heather Grove, Cranbourne East, VIC 3978

## February

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup>**

**175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SERVICE AND LUNCHEON**

**Service: 10.00am**

St. Oswalds Anglican Church

100, High Street, Glen Iris

**Lunch: 12.00pm onwards**

Springvale Reserve Community Function Room

1A Ericksen Street, Springvale VIC 3171

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup>**

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)**

**6.30pm**

Hall A, Mount Waverley Community Centre

Miller Crescent, Mount Waverley VIC 3149

## August

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>**

**TRANSFIGURATION SERVICE**

10.00 am

Venue: To be confirmed

**Saturday 29<sup>th</sup>**

**175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY THOMIAN BALL**

**6.30pm**

Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

25 Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

## November

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**MELBOURNE CUP SWEEP**

**2.00pm**

**Friday**

**THOMIAN FAMILY NIGHT**

**7.00pm**

Date and Venue: To be confirmed

## December

**Saturday**

**FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS**

**6.00 pm**

Date and Venue: To be confirmed





### *They remain in our memories forever*



**Rajan Asirwatham:** An old boy of STC Mount Lavinia in the 50s and a highly respected professional. He was the Senior Partner and Country Head of KPMG Sri for well over four decades, from 1961 to 2008. The *Institute of Certified Management Accountants* inducted Mr. Rajan Asirwatham to the *Global Accounting Hall of Fame* for his services to the profession in Sri Lanka. He was also a member of the Boards of S. Thomas' College, Bishop's College and Trinity College.



**David Jonklaas:** An old boy of STC Mount Lavinia in the 50s and was the Co-Editor of the College Magazine. After working in a trading company associated with the family, David went to Dubai to fulfill a Vision and became the Founding Pastor of the Grace Covenant Church International (GCCl) in Dubai in 2001 and extended to Qatar, Sharjah and the Philippines. The ministry has since grown to approximately 2000 members with the Philippines accounting for around 80%. David passed away in September 30<sup>th</sup> 2025 during a short holiday in Sri Lanka; and his memorial service had the following announcement: "I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race".



**Jith Peiris:** Was the Head Prefect at Prep School before joining College (Mount Lavinia) for a period of seven years (1959 – 1966). He later went to the UK, where he spent nearly 14 years gaining experience in stagecraft and drama at various theatres in London. On returning to his motherland, he was involved with theatrical productions, directing various plays and is remembered, for fostering and guiding the careers of budding young actors and directors. He was closely associated with the Lionel Wendt Theatre for many years as a Theatre Director.

### **Esto Perpetua**

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

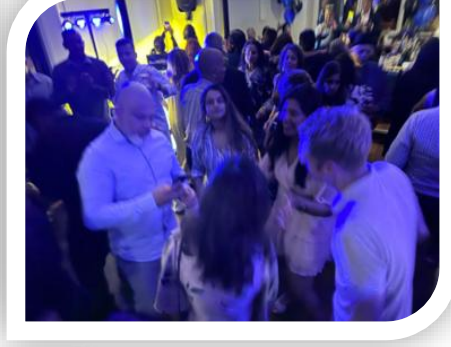
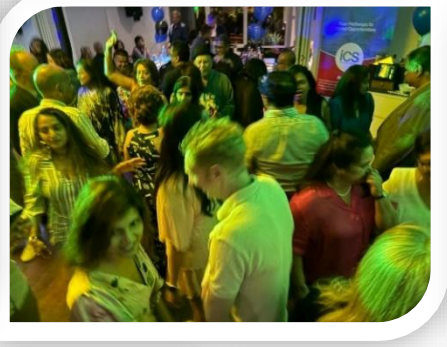
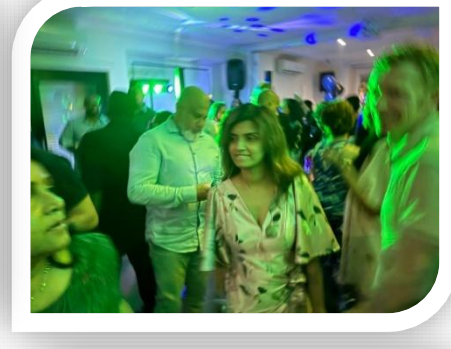
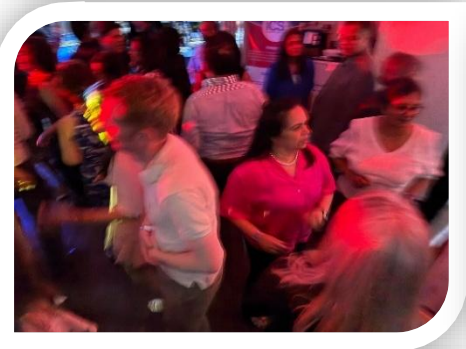
**We are reaching out to all Old Boys in Australia and Overseas** - If you do have an interesting anecdote about your days at College or some interesting tidbits about the after-school life of a fellow Thomian (or even a teacher) or just remember the good old days as they used to be, please, send in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

#### **Membership Register**

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

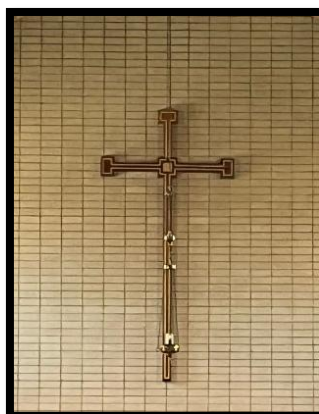


## PHOTO GALLERY: THOMIAN SOCIAL 2025





# PHOTO GALLERY: THOMIAN CAROL SERVICE 2025







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

ABN 18 114 799 661

PO Box 2337, Mount Waverley, Victoria 3149

[www.stcobaaust.org.au](http://www.stcobaaust.org.au)

1

### APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

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

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

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

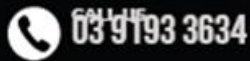
2

### PAYMENT DETAILS

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

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





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