

OLD BOYS' ASSOCIATION
ST. MARY'S COLLEGE
NEGOMBO

HISTORY

Nimal Mello
nimalmello@yahoo.com
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Old Boys' Association
St. Mary's College Negombo

Today the Old Boys' Association (OBA) is on the threshold of reaching an important milestone in its journey of providing more than a century of service to humanity at large and more specifically to the Maryites fraternity.

Alumni, in a more generic term, are a necessary and vital part of any schooling system. They reflect an important part of the school's history, more specifically achievements, one of the criterions with which the school is evaluated. They generally serve a greater purpose than the mere perception among people of meetings and fellowships; which are only a small part of the process. Many schools decorate their school halls with honour boards, recognizing the success of students over the years, including those who have achieved national representation in their own chosen field. They are not just a bragging tool for the school but a great motivation and inspiration for the present and future generations of the college. For those who have left school it is the pride of associating themselves with the school that has produced so many notable alumni. Besides, alumni events and social networking allow a school's presence to permeate beyond the boundaries of school. It is in this context that I delved into the history of the OBA of my *Alma Mater* on this very important milestone.

The founding year of the OBA has been a debatable issue among Maryites for some time now. This question has been lingering in my mind mainly due to the fact that the founding

father, Rev. Fr. F L Breton's service period at the college did not coincide with the purported founding year of the OBA which up to now is considered to be year 1921. However, recent research carried out by the author has discovered evidence that the formation of the OBA was long before year 1921 and that it goes back to December 1911 which in fact coincides with Fr. Breton's period at the college.

Founding of St. Mary's English Boys' High School

St. Mary's English Boys' School had its early humble beginning as a grant-in-aid school when Rev. Monsignor John Vistarini, the Parish Priest of St. Mary's Church



- Grand Street, started an English Boys' School in the Mission House for the benefit of the children of the Grand Street Parish. This was to become later, the St. Mary's English Boys' High School in a new building behind the Mission House in 1872.

There was controversy surrounding the exact date on which the school was started. While the first official records of the school are dated in the year 1872, the year inscribed on the plaque of the school at the footage of the statue of our Patroness Saint Mother Holy Mary is 1871. Besides, records indicate to the fact that the school was initially started in the mission house of

Grand Street and continued until the new building which was under construction then was ready to move in. This was when the new building was consecrated and declared open by His Grace Bishop Hilarion Sillani, Vicar Apostolic of Colombo, on June 10, 1872 with one hundred ninety six boys on roll at the time.

In the early days, the parish priest of the mission, in addition to being responsible for the pastoral work of the mission, was vested with the responsibility of managing the mission school too. This enabled efficient liaison and coordination between the mission and the Arch Bishop's House on matters relating to the parish and the mission school. This role was carried out sometimes in the form of a General Manager or Rector assisted by a Principal/Head Master. Sometimes under special circumstances a Director is recruited.

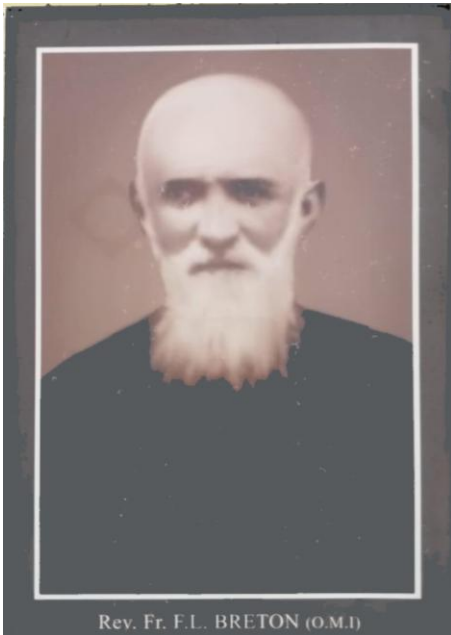
The early 1870 decade saw two of the most ambitious and gigantic projects undertaken by the Grand Street mission. These were St. Mary's Boys High School that started in 1871 and the laying of foundation for the monumental edifice, St. Mary's Church, in 1874 in the same premises signaling an era of the great awakening of the Catholics in Negombo envisioned by the great visionary Rev. Monsignor John Vistarini. These were by no means ordinary structures but colossal monuments that would stand the test of time serving many generations to come.

Realising the enormity of the task ahead Fr. Vistarini immediately recruited Christian Brothers to manage the education aspect of the school under the Directorship of Rev. Brother Timothy F.S.C. The 1872 annual filings of the school with the Department of Education shows Fr. Vistarini as the

Principal (Rector) with 196 students on roll. While the school continued to make steady progress, Rev. Fr. Vistarini's deep involvement in the church, school, and pastoral work took a heavy toll on his health until he was forced to retire in 1885.

Fr. F L Breton's Period

April 1906, was a turning point in the history of the college for it was the beginning of the tenure of Rev. Fr. Francis Lawrence Breton as the Director of the school on the invitation of the Rector, Rev. Fr. Brault. It was a farsighted move by the Rector who was already deeply involved with the final stages of the church construction that was gradually taking shape and form to what it is today.



Rev. Fr. Brault knew that the progress of the school so far was by no means satisfactory. By 1906 the school had only reached a total count of five teachers and one hundred thirty three students from its inception, a period of nearly thirty five years. In hindsight, Fr. Breton turned out to be the most qualified and suitable candidate to pull the school out of the predicament that it was in.

Fr. Breton immediately got down to working by recruiting qualified and experienced Mr. L A Langenberg as the Head Master and three other teachers in June 1906. In his circular dated 25th July 1906 to the parents he outlined his plans to raise the standard of St. Mary's English High School including the recruitment of certificated teachers with the aim of preparing the students for Cambridge Senior and Junior Examinations, providing boarding facilities in the upstairs of the Main Building starting from October 1906 with the aim of improving knowledge of English, etc.

Founding of the Old Boys' Association

In what appears to be the first step in forming the Old Boys' Association, Rev. Fr. Breton formed a Sports Club in 1907 with the help of many old boys. A cricket match was played between the 'old boys' and the 'present boys' to mark the inauguration of the sports club and it became a regular feature in the years to come.

The 1912 Annual Report speaks of **the inauguration of the Old Boys' Association in December 1911** with a gathering of over sixty of the Negombo elite, organised by the Vice President Mr. R F P Jayatilleke and the Secretary Mr. R S Dalpadado, with a call from Rev. Fr. Breton to those who have not joined to join the association.

Extracts from the Annual Report 1912 Log Book Page 40 & 41

Our Old Boys' Association which was started in December last has done wonders during the very first year of its existence. The splendid sports the best perhaps ever witnessed in Negombo, the Annual Dinner organised by it and which

brought together a gathering of over sixty of the elite of Negombo were such real successes that it makes one wish they were more frequent. I thank all the gentlemen who so generously contributed towards the successes of those to-day's especially our enthusiastic Vice-President Mr R. F. P. Jayatilake and our Secretary Mr R. S. Dalpadado. I cannot encourage this association too much and I earnestly wish all the Old Boys who have not yet joined it to enroll themselves without delay.

Extracts from the Annual Report 1913-1914 Log Book Page 45

Old Boys' Day was celebrated with the usual esprit de corps and once more I thank all the Old Boys for their promptitude in standing by their Alma Mater about which perhaps their recollections are both painful and pleasant. I congratulate them on their election of their new President Mr John H. Pereira whose his munificent donations and hearty aid and thank have given us tangible proof of the great interest he takes

Mr. John H. Pereira, presumably the First President of the OBA, was a self-made wealthy proprietary planter who made his fortune in the plantation industry through sheer

perseverance and industry. He was also a renowned philanthropist who donated much of his wealth to the poor and the needy with the church coming first and foremost in his acts of public munificence. The four magnificent bells and the marble Baptismal Font were specially imported from Europe and donated by him to St. Mary's Church. He also made substantial donations towards the school building fund from time to time. Having served the Negombo Urban Council as a member he was finally elected the Chairman.



Mr. JOHN H. PEREIRA
(Chairman, Urban Council, Negombo – 1924)

Starting a Boarding School, building additional class rooms, recruiting staff and preparing students for the local as well London Cambridge Senior and Junior Examinations with flying colors; formation of Sports Club, Literary Society, Old Boys' Association, CADET Corps, etc. are some of the work initiated by Fr. Breton among others.

The fact that the Annual Report 1913-1914 would be Fr. Breton's last annual report and how it would impact the future course of the school would have been anybody's guess. But in hindsight one thing was certain and that is the school was about to face one of its most serious challenges in its history. Culminating a decade of selfless and truly dedicated human development through a constantly evolving and innovative education service, it was time for Fr. F L Breton to depart essentially to continue his noble career at Holy Cross College, Kalutara from 1918 to 1921.

The Evolution of the OBA

Early records of the school show the excellent rapport that existed between the school and the old boys consisting of some of the elites in Negombo. Several fundraising projects had been organized to raise funds for building class rooms, library, prize-giving, etc. involving the old boys. At every possible turn he did not forget to shower praise on the old boys and other donors for their continuous patronage. The notion that he had the support of this group on matters relating to school development was largely based on conviction than hope.

Cricket matches were played regularly between the old boys and the present boys. Annual General Meetings of the OBA were well attended by the old boys and the elites of Negombo with the usual fanfare associated with the fellowship.

Chemistry Experimental Science was introduced to the school curriculum in 1919 as part of the requirement for the school to be upgraded into college status. Accordingly, a fairly well equipped science laboratory with a capacity of twenty four students at a time (eighteen for examination purposes) was commissioned with support from the old boys and other donors.

Later, on the 18th of December 1929, a fundraising project was organized by the OBA in order to collect funds for the improvement of the science laboratory. It was a concert that was staged at the Negombo Town Hall with a large crowd attending. Chairman of the Negombo Urban Council and the first President of the OBA, Mr. John H. Pereira, took a lead role along with the members of the association to make this event a great success.

Diamond Jubilee - College

Another important milestone in the history of the College was the Diamond Jubilee in 1931 which was marked by grand celebrations and the publication of the Diamond Jubilee Souvenir - “Blue, White and Gold”. In their usual gesture of cooperation and solidarity the old boys and the elites of Negombo; Minister of Home Affairs Hon. G C S Corea, Chairman of the Negombo Urban Council Mr. John H. Pereira, Gate Mudaliyar A E Rajapakshe, District Judge Waldow Sansoni, Attorney T Quentin Fernando, Messrs. D W Subasinghe, M H Kandawala, among others were at the forefront of these celebrations which lasted over five days from 28th October to 1st November 1931 climaxing with a gala dinner for 100 guests. The Rector, Principal, Masters. J C S Fernando and Austin, staff, students and old boys; all had the honour and privilege of celebrating this memorable event.

Centenary - College

Centenary celebrations were held to mark the completion of one hundred years of the college in 1971. Incidentally, the



centenary of the college coincided with the **Golden Jubilee of the OBA**. This monumental achievement was marked by several activities by the College, Parent Teacher Association and the Old Boys' Association including the

publication of a centenary souvenir. Although elaborate arrangements had been made to celebrate this special occasion with several activities planned throughout the year they were somewhat interrupted due to the insurrection that prevailed in the country causing immense hardships, chaos, etc. However, a gala dinner was held in grand style under the patronage of His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Cooray, attended by The Parish Priest of Grand Street Rev. Fr. Anthony Fernando, Rev. Fr. Stanislaus Fernandopulle, Former Rector Rev. Fr. Mervyn Weerakkody and staff who are still held in esteem after their times. Prominent political leaders including Deputy Minister of Defence and Foreign Affairs Hon. Lakshman Jayakody, Member of Parliament Hon. Denzil Fernando, etc along with invitees from the Negombo elite and a large number of the old boys in formal attire were also present. Rev. Fr. Neville Emmanuel, very fittingly, earned the privilege and honour of guiding the College during this historic period. The General Secretary of the OBA, Mr. Joseph Julian Fernando, who also acted as the Centenary Secretary along with the OBA collaborated with the Parent Teachers Association and the school administration in all activities to make this event a memorable one.

The First OBA Center

For the first time in the history of the OBA, an activity center of its own was arranged through the intervention of the Rector, Rev. Fr. Neville Emmanuel. This was the building adjoining the mission house to the north that was being unused for some time. At the request of the Rector, the then Parish Priest of Grand Street Rev. Fr. S Fernandopulle agreed to let the old boys use it for their activities. It became the center from

where the OBA activities such as monthly meetings, discussions, programmes, etc. were held. Furthermore, the TT Table that was donated by the Parish Priest was placed along the northern corridor of the mission house for the recreational use of the old boys which was used both by the old and the present boys; especially the author who was a student at the time has used it after college hours.

Quasquicentenary of the College

With the dawn of 1996 came the moment that all have been waiting for - the Quasquicentennial and all the celebrations and jubilations that go along with it. Rev Bro. Kumarasinghe Perera had just assumed duties as Principal, end 1995. According to him, the college was not at all ready to celebrate a big jubilee event such as this hence after consultation with all stakeholders celebrations were postponed to 1998.

The religious ceremonies took center stage that was celebrated under the patronage of His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo at the time, Rt. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando, a decorated old boy of the school himself. A keen enthusiast of providing affordable education to the needy children, His Grace's generous contribution went to develop the college library. Furthermore, the Archbishop also presided over "Awards of Excellence" that was organised by the OBA for the first time to recognise and felicitate award winning Maryites in fourteen identified fields. A "Jubilee Walk" organized by the OBA jointly with the college to mark the Quasquicentennial was a great success, the proceeds of which went to the formation of the College Brass Band.

The OBA was faced with the daunting task of raising the funds required for three ongoing projects namely; two college building complexes nearing completion and land filling of the newly acquired sports ground to be completed in time for the Jubilee. All the members rallied round the OBA in this hour of need. A carnival organized by the college in conjunction with the School Development Committee and the Old Boys' Association was an astounding success. For the first time in Negombo, export products from the Katunayake Free Trade Zone companies were allowed for sale subject to a nominal duty approved by His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka. The author played a key role in organizing this facility.

Throughout history the college had to depend on the Negombo Esplanade near the beach for much of its sporting needs. Yet, it did not deter the college from reaching the heights it did in the field of sports. Meanwhile, years of perseverance by the college administration together with the OBA on securing the Kamachchode grounds for the sporting activities of the college paid off finally. Although work started on this during the tenure of Mr. Paul Perera in the early 1980's, finally it was on the 19th August 1997 that the lease agreement between the college and Negombo Municipality was signed. Since then a great deal of effort and money has been spent on the ground to develop it to what it is today, one of the best in Negombo.

Millions of Rupees in funds required for these developments were raised by the old boys in their usual inimitable style by rallying round their *Alma Mater*. They organised several innovative fund raising projects such as "Maryites Mela", "Circus Pacifia", Maryites Dinner Dance, etc.

Significant Achievements by the OBA

By the turn of 20th century the OBA was slowly transforming into a professional body with streamlined systems and procedures. There was greater enthusiasm among the members resulting in increased participation in OBA activities.

Development of the sports ground took high priority during this period and went on for a period of time. It required land filling, leveling and the security wall along the perimeter costing millions of rupees. Fortunately, it was during this time that the Negombo Canal Restoration Programme was in progress and there were large volumes of silt dredged from the canal which was used to fill the sports ground.

There was a period of time when the OBA went into a state of hibernation. Not many activities were carried out during these periods. This situation irked many of the members in the committee and there were signs of trouble brewing within. It climaxed with some members seeking relief from the courts which was finally resolved with the intervention of Rev. Fr. Dr. Leslie Fernando, Vice Patron - OBA and Parish Priest - Grand Street.

This brought some sense of sanity and stability to the OBA. Very soon it was back to its usual form with members on a heightened vigor and enthusiasm as if to reclaim the lost time during the past periods of inactivity. Member's attendance improved tremendously. The Committee of Management, realising the improved morale among the members, sought to capitalize on it by organizing a number of events and projects. One such project was the carnival with live coverage from

Rupavahini in 2004. This was an unprecedented success with more than Rupees two million been raised which was spent on the development of the grounds, college library and the western band. Some of the innovative ideas used during this period were the holding of the annual dance in a specially constructed marquee on the college grounds and the monthly meetings held in different places under different circumstances.

While the ground security wall was nearing completion the focus shifted to improving the MOH Clinic which was in a much dilapidated condition. The arrangement of sharing this building between the Medical Officer of Health, Negombo Municipal Council and the OBA was regularised during this period. With this done, a complete refurbishment of this building costing millions of Rupees was undertaken by the OBA with funds received from the Negombo Municipal Council as well as its own funds. The OBA was finally very happy that they now have a permanent building adjacent to the beach to carry out their activities. Funds for these and more were raised by organizing a Beach Carnival with the support from the Mayor of Negombo Municipal Council which again was an outstanding success. Since acquiring of the ground in 1997, development work including the construction of the security wall costing approximately LKR 10 million had been carried out by the OBA.

Meanwhile, another significant move that was being mooted by members of the OBA was to secure the services of a Rector for the college. Although this reached different levels of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church there were no priest available at the time.

Although no fund raising activities were carried out for some time the OBA focused on continuing with the securing of a priest with much more vigour and a strategic approach. The idea was to talk the Principal into choosing the option of voluntary retirement, a stage which he had already reached by then and to get him on board with the OBA in finding a suitable candidate for the position after his retirement which was successful to some extent. Furthermore, direct approaches were made to His Eminence the Cardinal with some of the senior members of the OBA with support from the Grand Street Church Committee, well wishers and some old boy priests.

Another notable step taken during this period was the writing of an entirely new constitution in place of the one that has been in use for a long period of time with a number of amendments already made to it. The need was for a comprehensive constitution that incorporates the present and future requirements of the OBA. The new constitution was approved on 31st March 2012.

With the establishment of a Cricket Academy with the support of both the OBA and the parents a new era of inter class cricket matches as well as soccer matches were organized giving a new impetus to Sports in the college.

In a rare show of appreciation the OBA organized a Teacher Felicitation which was a fitting tribute to all the teachers present and past under the patronage of His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo at the time, Rt. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando.

Years of unrelented effort on securing a priest finally paid off with the appointment of Rev. Fr. Jayantha Wickremasinghe as Principal/Rector of the college in December 2013. This was a joyous day not only for the OBA but the entire township which had been in the wait for such a long period of time. To mark the arrival of the new Rector, the OBA spent nearly LKR Two million on refurbishing the new administration block which was declared open on the 4th of December 2013.



There was an air of renewed hope and expectations with the arrival of the new Rector after nearly thirty two years. The OBA was determined to extend its full support in order to make this new appointment to work well for the college. Accordingly, it was decided to donate an eighteen seater TATA School Bus with contribution from some of the members, donors and the balance met with OBA funds. This kind gesture did go a long



way in addressing the long felt need of the college especially when it came to transporting students and teachers to official group functions away from the college.

The dream of having its own activity center with facilities for training, discussions, meetings, gymnasium saw the light of the day when foundations were laid at 7.30 am on Wednesday the 13th of March 2019 for a three storey building with a roof-top of approximately 8100 square feet of built up space, adjacent to the present OBA House premises overlooking the vast expansive Indian Ocean.

A simple foundation laying ceremony took place to mark this unique event with Very Rev. EV Ciswan De Croos, Vice Patron and old boy priest, and the Rector Rev. Fr. Jayantha and a host of old boys



including Hon. Minister Nimal Lanza and Hon. Mayor Dayan Lanza. This was the single largest project, costing over Rupees Fifty Five million, ever to be undertaken by the OBA.

The need for fund raising on a heightened scale was well understood by the committee members hence the support and cooperation was quite forthcoming. A cocktail organized by the “OBA House Sub-Committee” to raise funds for the new building was successful in raising approximately Rupees Five million. Both members of the OBA and donors contributed to this fund generously. By the end of 31 March 2020, the superstructure of the building was complete at a cost of Rupees Thirteen Million Two Hundred Seventy Thousand. During these periods many opportunities to raise funds were lost due to the cancellation of at least two high potential fundraisers owing to

first the Easter Sunday Attack in April 2018 and then the Covid-19 Pandemic for a greater part in 2020.

In a departure from the tradition the OBA introduced Soft Skill development and Career Guidance Programs with a view to equipping the school leavers with the right skills to face the ever changing and competitive job market. Although a successful initial programme was held in September 2019 it could not be taken forward due to Covid-19 Pandemic.

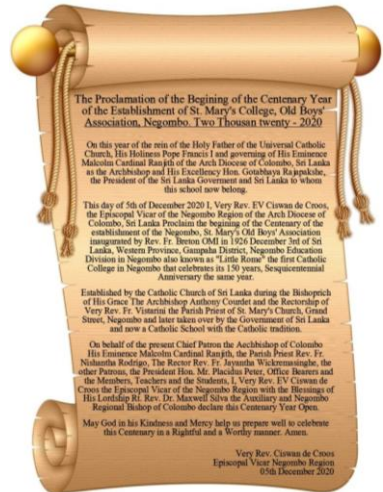
Since March 2020 the Covid-19 Pandemic has been ravaging in the country disrupting lives of people and businesses. Its effect on the OBA activities has been devastating. Many of the fund raising programmes had to be cancelled costing millions of Rupees in revenue to the OBA. The functions of the OBA have now been restricted to the monthly meetings most of which are held online. For instance the Annual General Meeting -2020 of the OBA had to be postponed prompting the President at the time to step down in accordance with the constitution. Accordingly, an Interim President was appointed until the next AGM was held three months later. A major outdoor event, Drive-in-Concert, planned by the OBA had to be changed to a much smaller indoor event resulting in lost revenue.

Sesquicentenary - College

The most anticipated milestone of the college and the OBA has already dawned on us in the year 2021 which marks the unique feat of completing 150 years (Sesquicentenary) of service by the College and 100 years (Centenary) by the OBA. It provides an opportunity to reflect on the past achievements of these

great institutions as well as introspect on the preparations to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Elaborate plans had been made for the launch and celebration of the jubilee year including a plethora of exciting events spread over the year thus making it one of the most festive and memorable periods in the history of the college and the OBA. Various stakeholders such as the college led by the Rector, the Old Boys' Association and School Development Committee worked on it for months and years ahead. However, due to the catastrophic situation brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic globally and particularly in our country which seriously affected the lives of all people, plans had to be either shelved or trimmed in order to comply with stringent health guidelines introduced by the government. Accordingly, a subdued but no less a solemn, ceremonies were held to commemorate declaration of the jubilee year, an epochal event of the birth of the *sesquicentennial* year of St. Mary's College, Negombo on the 7th of October 2020 and the *centennial* year of the OBA on the 5th of December 2020.



Centenary - OBA

The “Declaration of Centennial Jubilee Year” of the OBA was made by the Old Boy Priest, Episcopal Vicar of the Negombo Region Very Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos during the thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration held at St. Mary’s Church Grand Street on 5th December 2020 with the Rector, Rev. Fr. Jayantha



Wickremasinghe and a large congregation of the OBA members in attendance. All were treated to light refreshments afterwards following health guidelines.

Plans are also afoot to celebrate the “Jubilee Mass”, jointly organised by the college and the OBA, on the 7th of October 2021 on a grand scale subject to the prevailing situation and health guidelines effective at the time. Celebrations to include parading His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith - The Archbishop of Colombo and Patron of the OBA, His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva - The Auxiliary and Negombo Region Bishop, Religious dignitaries, Old Boy Priests, Special Invitees along with staff and students of the college, OBA members, SDC members, etc. All will be treated to a sumptuous breakfast after the High Mass.

Later on in the year a “Jubilee Dinner” Has been planned on the 3rd of December 2021 at Shangri-La with a view to sharing our sense of accomplishment and joy with the world. This is

slated to be a top notch event on the lines of a “Black-Tie-Dinner” with which we hope to conclude the jubilee celebrations.

Regular Annual Commitment

The OBA has become the single largest donor of the college developmental activities. Since its inception in 1911 it has followed this tradition without exception. Despite its heavy commitment to the construction of its activity center the OBA continues to honour its annual commitments to the college, the larger society and its members too. Those are;

- ❖ Monthly Games Coach Fees, Annual Teacher felicitations, Annual Sports Meet and other competitions, Annual scholarships, Annual Blood Donation campaign, etc to the tune of approximately LKR 1 million per annum.
- ❖ National disaster relief such as flood, drought, Covid-19, etc.
- ❖ Annual members get together, monthly meetings at a remote location are charged at cost to members.

The OBA generates much of its revenue through various means such as annual fund raising projects, dinner dance, sponsorships, donations, member’s contributions, etc.

Notable Alumni

Although education was the primary objective of the college, it went beyond the traditional framework in to areas such as leadership, discipline, spirituality, etc in order to produce well rounded citizens. This could be one of the reasons why it is well







known for its service of producing a large number of catholic priests, if not the highest, who have served in very high and responsible positions in the Catholic Church. Even today, on an average, there are two to three old boys reaching priesthood every year.

A shining example is the Arch Bishop Emeritus Rt. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando who was called to eternal rest on the 11th April 2019. Fr. Nicholas Marcus Fernando became the youngest, at the age of 44, and the first diocesan priest to be appointed Archbishop on March 30, 1977 and since then His Grace has spearheaded and guided the Catholic flock of Sri Lanka with admiration. During his tenure as The Archbishop of Colombo, His Grace steered the Catholic Church by skillfully avoiding controversies and took steps to strengthen and build on religious, social and educational aspects which not only benefited the Catholic community but all Sri Lankans in general.

Among the brightest products of the college is a scholar who earned fame and popularity through his excellent work in the fields of print and electronic media, radio, education, writing, etc. Dr. Aryarathna Lankachandra earned a First Class pass at the London Matriculation exam. He also earned a Commonwealth scholarship for his post graduate education at the prestigious Oxford and London Universities. He has also served as a member in a Presidential Commission.

Solidarity - The Essence of OBA

As one could imagine our forefathers obviously did not have the luxuries and the resources that we enjoy today but they had the vision and the foresight. Whilst we are ever so grateful to them, the successive committees ensured that the journey continued despite the ups and downs and were instrumental in shaping the organization vision into what it is today.

-  To foster and maintain the spirit of fraternal union among the Old Boys of the College
-  To promote loyalty to the Alma Mater and to stimulate interest, in its activities and progress
-  To promote the spirit of service among all members
-  To work closely with the College administration in continuously improving identified areas of the College and assisting its students with their identified needs by drawing upon the skills and strengths of the old boys
-  To promote; the preservation of the College traditions and its heritage
-  Fostering excellent relationship with the Church, the administration of the College, the School Development Society and the Negombo City officials

All of us who are involved with the OBA at present know exactly what it means to be dedicated to a cause such as this. It requires the commitment and the sacrifice of our leisure and family time on top of what we already do in our careers which I am sure we are all quite prepared to do for a worthy cause like this. So for our predecessors to have continued this journey all these years is not only a great achievement but also a highly

commendable act. Now it is up to us to continue this journey into the future following in the footsteps of our forefathers.

Reflecting back on the achievements made by the OBA in the past one can only be proud of it. The challenge for us is to do bigger and better things so that we can set even more ambitious targets for our future generations.

The OBA seeks to harness the goodwill from all Maryites present and past of all walks of life scattered across the globe. It creates an opportunity for every one of them to participate and be involved in the development activities of our *Alma Mater* no matter where they live.

Long live *Alma Mater*!!!!

Long Live OBA!!!!

Nimal Mello

Chairman - Sesquicentennial Committee

Immediate Past President, OBA

May 2021

Sources:

St. Mary's College Archives (Log Books)

St. Mary's Church Archives

Maris Stella College Archives (Log Books)

National Archives

Interview with Rector, St. Mary's College, Rev. Fr. Jayantha Wickremasinghe

Interview with Brother Principal, Maris Stella College, Rev. Bro. Michael De Waas

Interview with Rev. Fr. Xystus Kurukulasuriya, Coordinator of Prime Minister and Former Archivist.

Interview with Mr. Lakshman Kurera, Former Vice Principal – St. Mary's College

Interview with Mr. Gregory Salgado Gunaratne, Former Teacher of St. Mary's College & Historian

Annexure 1. Few words about the OBA - UK Branch

ST MARY'S COLLEGE NEGOMBO, SRI LANKA OBA – UK BRANCH



17 Retreat Close, Kenton, Harrow, HA3 0JQ

BIRTH OF IDEAS

In 1990 Mr. Anthony Meegolla (student of St. Mary's College, Negombo, around 1950) who had comfortably settled down in London, dreamed up an idea to assist the College that had given him an excellent education and a good future. He enlisted the help of another past student Mr. Brian Rulach to form the nucleus of what is now known as St. Mary's College, Negombo OBA (UK Branch)

During visits to Sri Lanka they visited the College and introduced themselves to the then Principal and discussed ways of assisting the College. At the beginning they contributed various amounts to the College out of their own finances.

But, as their ambitions began to grow, they got the idea of contributing larger donations by organising a Sunday Lunch Buffet for old students residing in the UK, their families and friends. This way the organisers expected to earn a reasonable income to extend their help to the College. This event was published in the local Sri Lankan newspaper "News Lanka". The venue of the buffet was the 'Prince of Ceylon Restaurant', which as the name suggests was of Sri Lankan origin able to cater Sri Lankan food.

This venture earned them a sum of approximately £500 to £700 which was considered a princely amount at that time. The enlarged and officially elected St.Mary's College Old Boys Association (UK) Branch (4 members) made a major contribution in 1994 of £1000 worth of sports equipment to their Alma Mater. and was presented to the college by the then President Anthony Meegolla during a College Assembly.

During these events the organisers were able to meet and greet old Maryites who were willing to volunteer, to help generate more funds by selling tickets to their friends in future years, and help organise the lunch buffets. The success of these buffets and the steady increase in OBA membership to 15, and old Maryites and well-wishers spurred the organisers to look at ways of improving and expanding the sources of income and decided to upgrade the lunch buffet to a Dinner Dance.

By placing advertisements In the Sri Lanka papers (News Lanka) they were able to sell tickets for (what was to be) the first Annual Dinner Dance.

In 1999 the Association along with the Parent OBA in Negombo, each contributed Rs.100, 000 towards the purchase of musical instruments for the College Band.

It was decided that whenever the College needed funding for any specific project, the proposal would be put before the Association and a decision made as to whether we were in a position to fund the entire project and/or contribute part of the funding requirement according to the availability of funds.

The Association met from time to time to discuss, how and for what finances should be spent to improve the College facilities and any other areas that needed funding which was within the capabilities of the Association, taking into account the available funds.

Over the years with better income from the Annual Dinner Dances and donations received from Associates and well-wishers the Venue of these Dances had to be changed due to the increased capacity, needs of the attendees and the requirement for better placed venues.

During subsequent years the Association has purchased Cricket Equipment for the College Team including Long and Short handled bats, balls, pads, gloves, and sleeping bags for visitors. This presentation was reviewed in the Daily News with a double page article along with pictures.

During subsequent years the Associations contributions included:

- a) Improvements to the sports grounds, purchase of netballs, footballs and providing two sets of cricket nets
- b) Supporting two students from poor families to attend University, with all expenses, including books, monthly allowance for their upkeep until graduation.
- c) The full refurbishment of the College Toilets from the ground upwards.
- d) Purchase of Computers for the new block,
- e) A prayer room in the main block and
- f) Contribution towards the improvement of the main building.

During the last three years the Association has not been able to have our annual dances due to sympathy with the victims of the bombings in Sri Lanka followed by the pandemic around the world.

We are open to requests from the College for any funding requirements and would respond as long as they are within our available resources.

Annexure 2. Honour Roll of OBA Presidents/General Secretaries

Term	President	General Secretary
1911-1912	R F P Jayatilleke (VP)	R S Dalpadado
1912-unknown	John H Pereira	Unknown
1952-1970		Dominic Fernando*
1970-1980		Julian Joseph*
1980-1998	Gaston Fernando	O'Reagan Pinghe
1998-1999	Shemal Fernando	Neil Fernando
1999-2001	Milroy Fernando	Nelson Fernando/Terrence Fernandopulle
2001-2002	Kingsley Fernando	Terrence Fernandopulle
2002-2003	Vajira Rodrigo	Terrence Fernandopulle
2003-2006	Anthony Fernando	Neil Fernando
2006 - 2010	Neil Fernando	Ranil Fernando
2010-2011	Nishantha Adhikari	Lalindra Kirthisinghe
2011-2014	Placidus Peter	Lalindra Kirthisinghe
2014-2017	Lalindra Kirthisinghe	Nimal Mello
2017-2020	Nimal Mello	Rohan Amarasinghe
2020(June-August)	Paul Stanley (Interim President)	Rohan Amarasinghe
2020 onwards	Placidus Peter	Rohan Kurera/Rohan Amarasinghe

* The General Secretary assumed an executive role. This system was changed since 1980.

* Years to be verified.