

**An Extract from "S.THOMAS' COLLEGE  
AT GURUTALAWA FARM 50 YEARS AGO  
-SOME REMINISCENCES-" by-Torrington (Torry) Jayawardena, Farm Manager  
(1942-1945)**

*I was on the staff at S.T.C. Mt. Lavinia in April 1942. Shortly after the Japanese Air Raid in the city, we evacuated to form branches at Getambe, Pradeniya and Gurutalawa Farm, Welimada. I moved to Gurutalawa along with the late Dr. R.L.Hayman, Rev. A.J. Foster and a few members of the S.T.C. Mt. Lavinia staff and so the roots of this great school were laid.*

*I record below some reminiscences of the pioneering days at Gurutalawa.*

*Gurutalawa Farm is about 35 acres in extent and at an elevation of about 4000 feet. It is situated in the wind-swept up-country patanas in the Welimada plateau. The climate is healthy. S.T.C. was fortunate for we moved into a developed farm. The farm had been laid out with meticulous care. The original patana land had been terraced. There were a few farm buildings. On the South-Western periphery of the land were the wind-belts planted with the various species of Eucalyptus. Below this was the dairy. There were about 25 head of cattle. The Sindi herd was the pride of the farm. There was also a flock of about 150 Persian Black Head sheep.*

*Below the dairy, the land had been terraced and beds laid out for vegetable cultivation. Vegetables such as cabbage, carrot and cauliflower had been planted and were growing well. Close to the vegetable area was the poultry yard. There were about 50 birds.*

*The orchard was the cynosure of the farm. Never had we seen a magnificent orchard such as this any where in Sri Lanka. There was a rich plantation of Mandarines, the golden, seedless variety There were the very rare Palestine Naval Oranges. A few Persimmon trees had been planted near the vegetable area. Persimmon is a fruit, the size of an apple which turns blood red when ripe. All the fruits were very tempting. I must not forget the few Pyrethrum beds. These plants are similar to the chrysanthemum with finely divided leaves. Insecticides are made from the dried flowers.*

*The balance land area had been developed for cattle and sheep grazing. Our drinking water supply was from a spring located in Gonagala, a formidable hill which flanked the farm to its North. The water was gravity fed and filtered.*

*Our benefactors were the late Mr. and Mrs. Leslie de Saram. It had to be a great hearted philanthropist who would gift a farm the like of Gurutalawa.*

*The above is a fair picture of Gurutalawa as it was 50 years back.*

*In the initial years, there was no significant change in the lay-out of the farm. Agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry were carried out undistributed. We were able to set apart a block of land for the farm club of the students.*

*We lived as a happy family under Dr.R.L.Hayman's leadership and occupied the main building, the Farm Manager's quarters and the labour lines. Dr. Hayman and Rev. Foster were in the main building. I shared a small room in the labour lines with Mr. W. A. Wijesinghe (Alex) and Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Perera were in the next room. A small room in the main building was used as the College Office. Dr. Hayman and I shared this room for our work.*

*We were producing milk, butter, eggs, vegetables and fruits. On a vacant plot of land, the first potato crop was planted and successfully harvested.*