

The Glorious History – Proud Inception of Harischandra College, Negombo

It is a privilege for me to have an opportunity to research, explore and reveal the firsthand information with photographs regarding the background of the inception & the historical facts of Harischandra College, Negombo to the public for the first time.

Harischandra College is a result of an enthusiastic effort to establish an English Buddhist school in the 'Little Rome' by upper class Buddhist leaders such as Sir Ernest de Silva, Senator Lady Evadne de Silva, Prof. Gunapala Malalasekera, Mr. T D Mendis, Dr. C L A de Silva...etc & the basic discussions were held at 'Sirimathi Paya' (presently the Prime minister's Office), the residence of Sir, Earnest de Silva in Colombo 07.

Hope the glorious history of school would impress the students / past pupils and make them more attached to school.

Special gratitude: Mrs. Priyangi de Silva & Ms. Srimali de Silva

Cheers!

Dinesh Udugamasooriya - Group 90/93'
Committee Member - Publicity & Media
Senior Past Pupils Association, Harischandra College, Negombo

➤ A Buddhist English School to Negombo

Negombo has been a stronghold of Catholics since the time of Portuguese. There were twelve Catholic schools in town, to the only Buddhist- Sinhala school at that time, yet suburbs were remained high Buddhist populated. There was an emerging concern over 'Buddhist education for Buddhist Children' & the ideology of establishing a Buddhist-English school came to light in this context.

➤ Groundwork

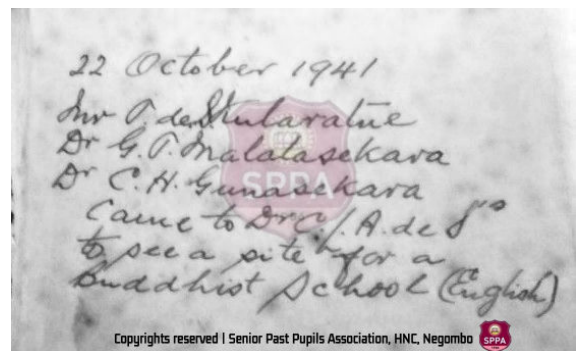
Few high net-worth educated, Buddhist philanthropists searched on to lay the basic groundwork to establish a Buddhist-English school in Negombo. All these basic steps were noted down in own handwritings by Dr. C L A de Silva who donated the plot of land to build the school.

The three initial meetings were held to form the "Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha" the managing body of the school, at 'Sirimathipaya' Colombo 07, the residence of the richest man in Ceylon then Sir. Ernest de Silva ('Sirimathipaya' is presently the Prime Minister's Office at the Flower road, Colombo 07). Senator Lady Evadne de Silva (spouse of Sir. Ernest de Silva) was the first Chairperson of Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha & Dr. C L A de Silva was the 1st Manager.

- Minutes of important events of the groundwork of school

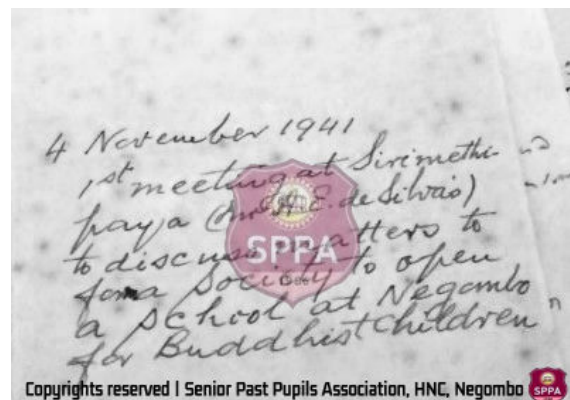
1) 22nd October 1941 -

Mr. P de S Kularatne, Dr. Gunapala Malalasekara, Dr. C H Gunasekara came to meet Dr. C L A de Silva to see a site for a Buddhist school (English)

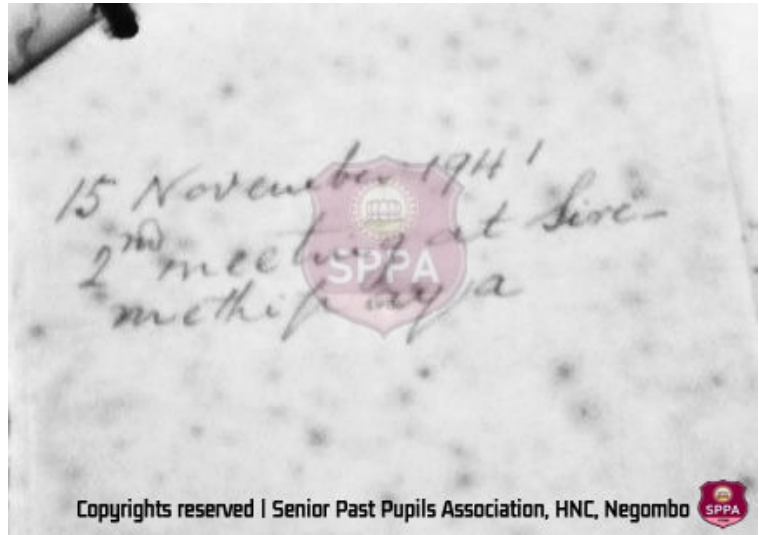


2) 04th November 1941 -

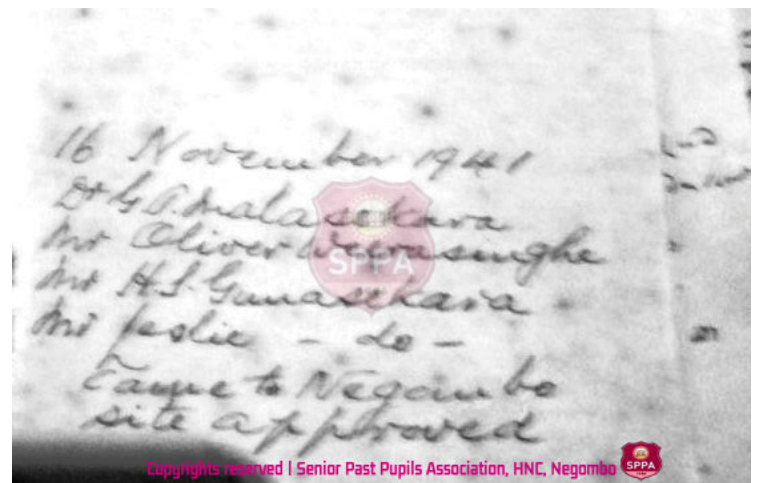
1st meeting at 'Sirimathipaya' (Mr. A E de Silva's) to discuss matters to form a Society to open a school at Negombo for Buddhist Children.



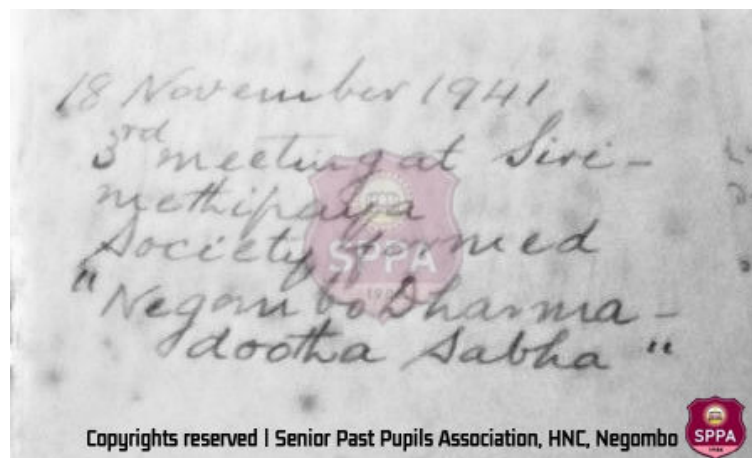
- 3) **15th November 1941** –
2nd meeting at 'Sirimathipaya'



- 4) **16th November 1941** –
Dr. Gunapala Malalasekara, Mr. Oliver Weerasingha, Mr. Harald I Gunasekara & Mr. Leslie Gunasekara came to Negombo, site approved



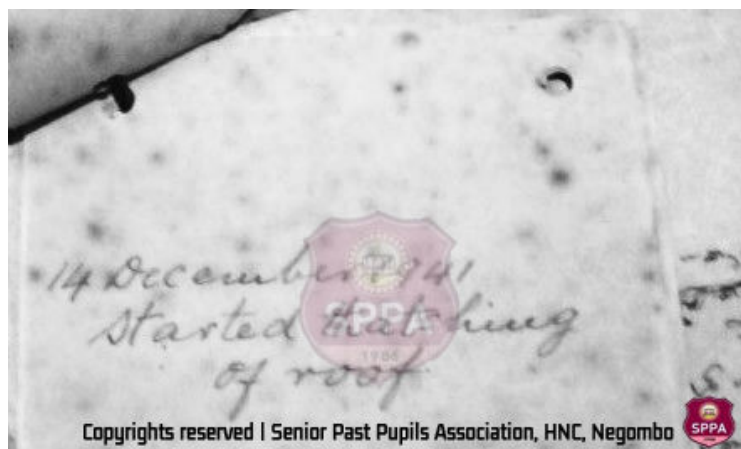
- 5) **18th November 1941** –
3rd meeting at 'Sirimathipaya'
Society formed
"Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha"



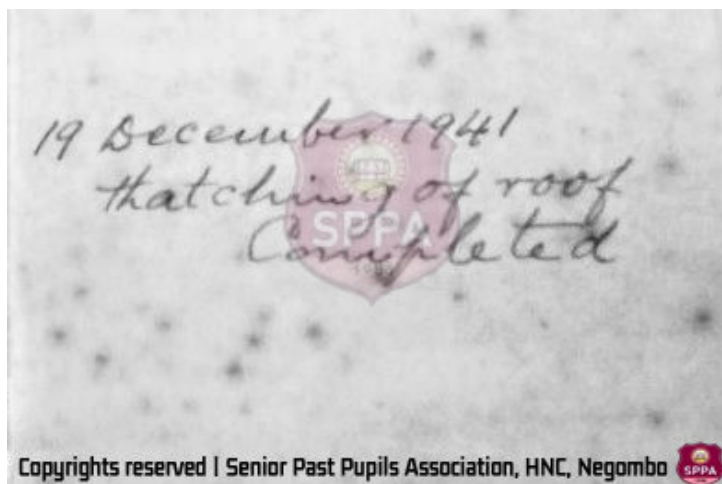
6) 19th November 1941 –
Started cleaning site



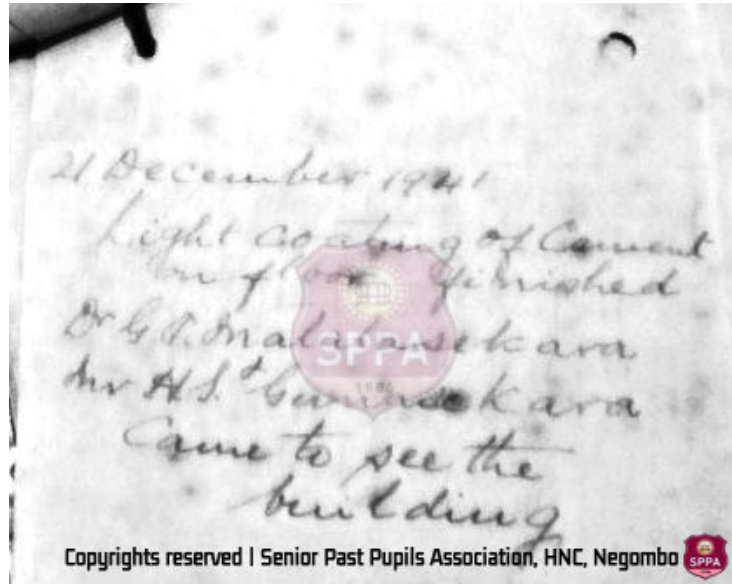
7) 14th December 1941 –
Started thatching of roof



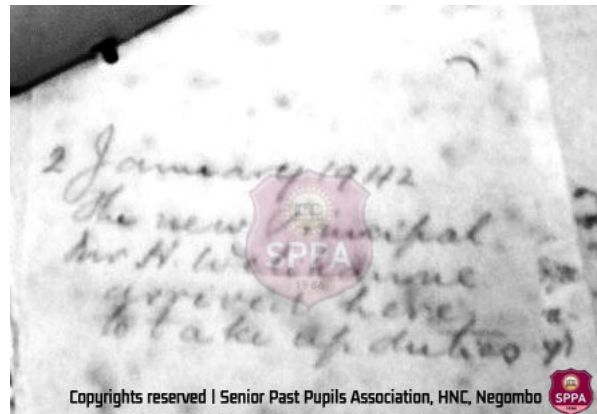
8) 19th December 1941 –
Thatching of roof completed



- 9) **21st December 1941** –
Light coating of cement on floor finished.
Dr. Gunapala Malalasekara, Mr. Harald I
Gunasekara came to see the building



- 10) **02nd January 1942** –
The new principal Mr. H Welikanna arrived here to
take up duties



➤ Prof. Gunapala Malalasekara



Professor Gunapala Malalasekara is one of a leading personality pioneered to establish Harischandra College, Negombo. The letter where he informed to expedite the construction work in his own handwritings is depicted herewith.

He was the first ambassador to USSR & has held many diplomatic positions abroad. He was influenced by the vision of Anagarika Dharmapala & has been an active person in Buddhist activities across the country. Prof. Malalasekara was a teacher at Ananda College & was the principal of Nalanda College later.

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අපේ වැඩේ ගැන දැන් සැකයක් නැති නිසා 15 වෙනිදා වනතුරු බලා නොසිට ඉඩම පිළියෙළ කිරීම, බඩු වලට ඇනවුම් දීම, සැලැස්ම පිළියෙළ කිරීම යනාදිය වහාම කලොත් හොඳ නොවේද? සැලැස්ම නගර සභාවෙන් පිළිගත යුතු නම් ඒ ගැනද ක්‍රියා කළ යුතුයි. ජලන මේ සතිය තුලම ලබාගත හොත් ද සිල්වා මැතිනියට පෙන්වා කුලරත්න මහතා ආදී කීප දෙනෙකුටත් පෙන්වා අදහස් ගෙන නගර සභාවට යැවිය හැකියි. එනිසා වැඩේ ඉක්මන් වෙනවා ඇති.

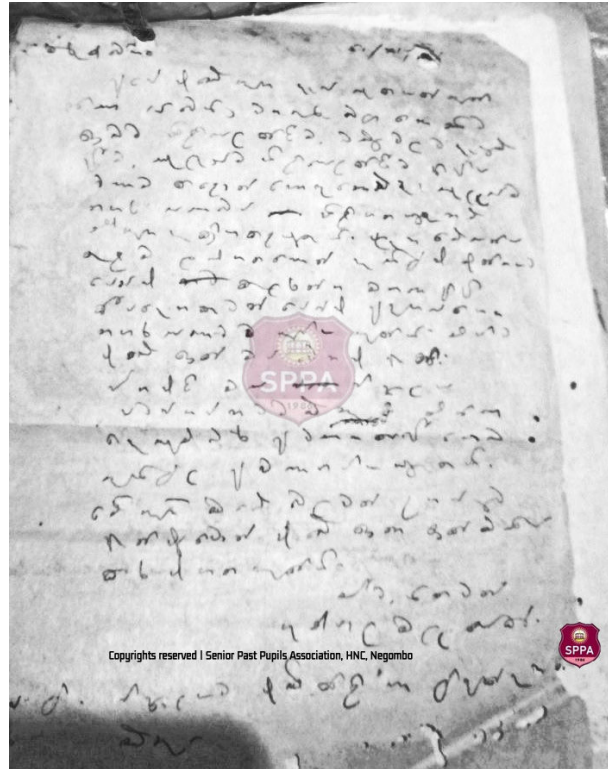
ජනවාරි මස විද්‍යාලය පටන් ගන්නටම ඕනෑ. එනිසා දෙසැම්බර් අවසාන නොවී ගොඩනැගිල්ල අවසාන විය යුතුයි.

මේ ගැන ඔබේ බලවත් උනන්දුව ඇති වුවොත් වැඩේ ඉතා ඉක්මනින් කරගත හැකියි.

මිට හිතවත්,

ගුණපාල මලලසේකර

ප.ලි. විද්‍යාලයට වැසිකිලි හා ලිඳක් ද ඕනෑ.



➤ Dr. C L A de Silva

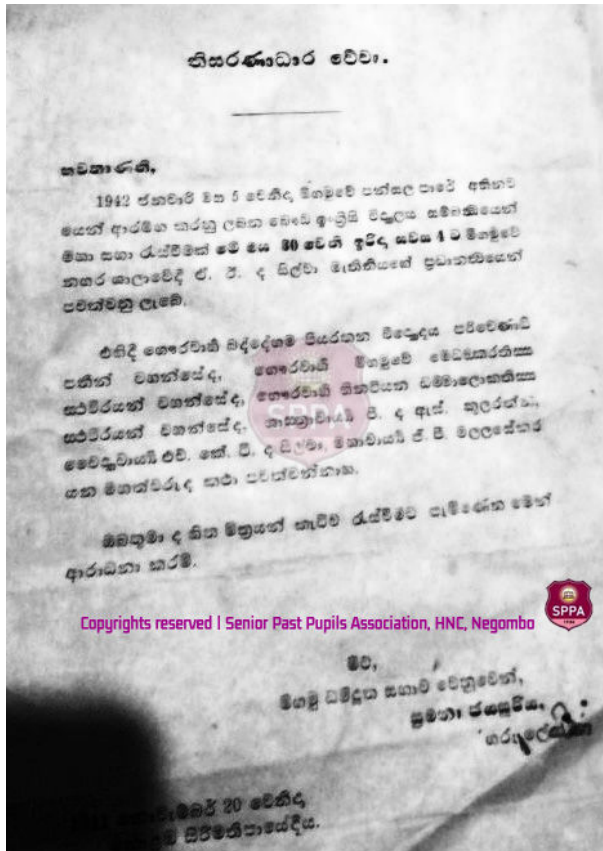
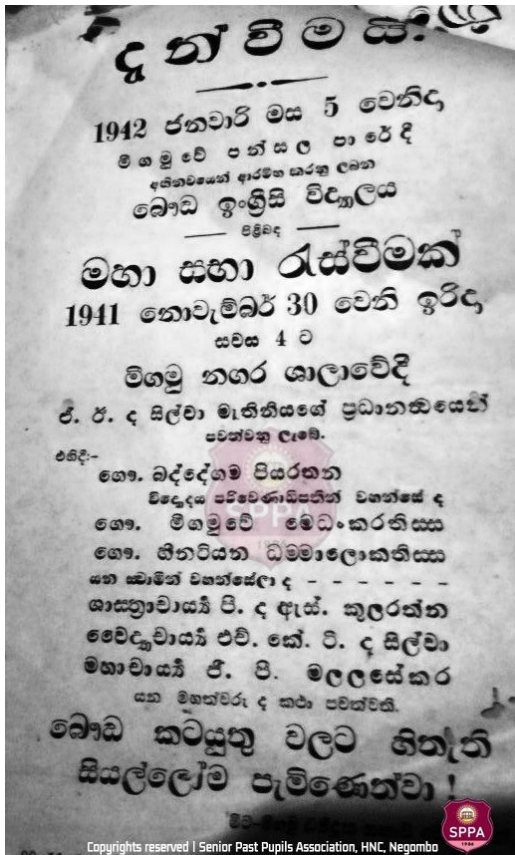


Dr. Charles Lambert Albert de Silva is the one who donated the plot of land to build Harischandra College, Negombo. He was the 1st Manager of Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha, the managing body of school then & was a famous character among Buddhists in Negombo. After two years, he passed away on 28th Aug'1944.

Pic : Dr. C L A de Silva, captured in 1936

A general meeting was held on the 30th November 1941 at the Town hall, Negombo in relation to the opening of 'Buddhist-English School' at the Temple road, Negombo with the participation of Lady Evadne de Silva and other distinguished guests. Mr. P de S Kularatne, a former principal of Ananda College, Colombo was amongst the guest speakers of the meeting.

It is important to note that the opening date of school had been decided, four days after the site was approved (i.e. 16th Nov' 1941) & two days after "Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha" was formed. Still the name of school had not been finalised.



Pics ; The poster & the invitation for the General Meeting held on 30th Nov' 1941

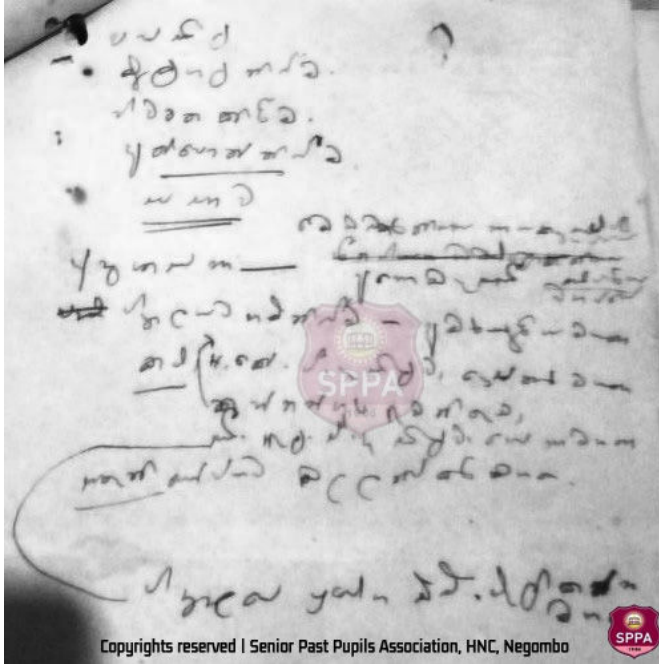
➤ School Opening

The date of opening was initially declared as 05th of January 1942; however it was rescheduled to 04th of Jan' 1942 at 3.00p.m. The agenda of the opening ceremony was prepared by Prof. Gunapala Malalasekara.

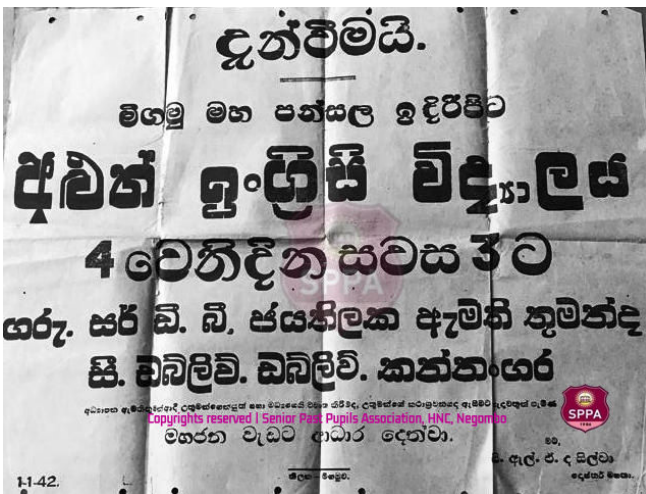
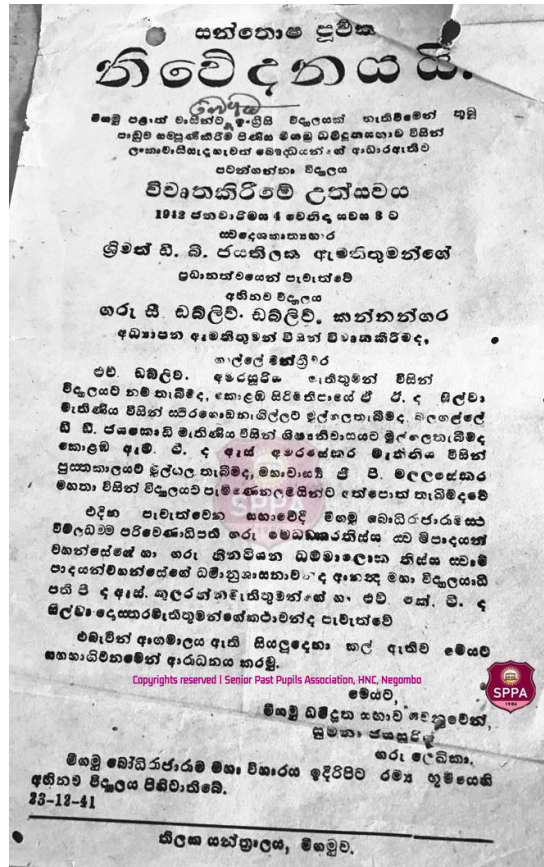
The school was declared open by Hon. C W W Kannangara (Minister of Education) & the Chief Guest was Sir. D B Jayatilaka (Hon Minister of Home affairs). Name of the school (i.e. Harischandra Vidyalaya) was declared in memory of Walisinha Harischandra from Negombo, by Hon. Henry W Amarasuriya (MP – Galle District)

Some of distinguished guests who were present at the opening ceremony are as follows,

- Ven. Medhankarathissa thero – Chief incumbent Bodhirajarama temple, Negombo
- Ven. Heenatiyana Dhammalokathissa thero
- Senator Lady Evadne de Silva
- Prof. Gunapala Malalasekara
- Mr. P de S Kularatne (Former Principal, Ananda College, Colombo)



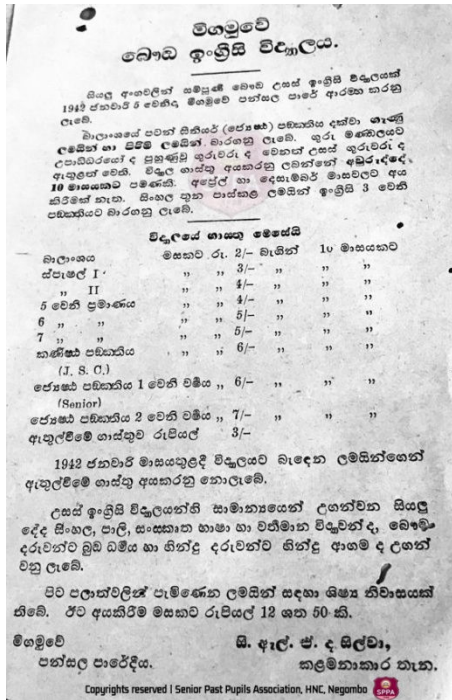
Pic: The agenda of the School Opening Ceremony prepared by Prof. Malalasekara



Pics: The posters issued for the grand opening ceremony of new Buddhist-English School in front of Bodhirajarama temple, Negombo

On the opening day, it was arranged to lay down few foundation stones to construct several buildings for the school. Among which were a Permanent building, a hostel & a library. Prof. Malalasekara had read the alphabet for students as a compliment.

➤ **Harischandra Vidyalaya – Newly Opened Buddhist-English School**



Harischandra Vidyalaya, Negombo was built & operated by 'Negombo Dhamma Dootha Sabha', the managing body. Though it started with five students under cadjan sheds, the managing body took steps to start constructing few buildings on the opening day itself as described above. The school was structured to cater students from Grade 1 to Senior classes as a hi-standard English mixed school.

Harischandra Vidyalaya had taken steps to teach Hinduism other than Pali & Sanskrit which shows its interest to teach not only Buddhist children but also non Buddhists.

The hostel facilities opened its doors to outstation students as well. Another facility school had extended was the switching option to Grade three students from Sinhala to English medium at the admission.

Pic : The tariff of Service charges

➤ **Bhadrani Wickramaratne – First Student of Harischandra Vidyalaya**



Bhadrani Wickramaratne (Mendis) was fortunate to be registered as the 1st student of the school & she is a granddaughter of Dr. C L A de Silva. Having born on 20th December 1936, Mrs. Bhadrani Mendis studied for five years at the school. Mrs. Priyaseeli de Silva, a relation was her 1st teacher.

She is living a happy & a peaceful life in Colombo today.