



Netherhall House

FOREWORD

by
Bernard Audley,
Chairman of the
Netherhall House
Management Committee



In my speech of welcome to Her Majesty the Queen Mother at the opening of the New Buildings on November 1st 1966, I spoke about the well-loved home with a true family atmosphere which was and is Netherhall House. The foundation stone on which it was built—the Christian ideal of service—has continued to help students to give others the benefits they have received during their stay at Netherhall House—whether it is the importance of study, the help given to the old and lonely in local hospitals, the work done with young people in the Boys Club, or simply the cheerfulness so characteristic of the residence which spreads to those outside.

The work of Netherhall House continues and grows with the passing of the years. The consistently high academic achievements, the large variety of courses and activities—to help residents, other university students, and sixth-formers going into university—and the number of leading figures giving talks, are a witness to the energy and enthusiasm of those who run the House.

This energy has burst the confines of Netherhall House itself to lead to the opening of other centres of similar inspiration. Kelston for example was started by some Netherhall residents travelling each week-end to South London, and must now qualify as one of the best Boys Clubs in London, having several award-winning films to its credit. Others have gone as far afield as Japan and Nigeria to help the work in those countries, and wherever one travels, the same family spirit prevails, characteristic of Netherhall House and of centres directed by Opus Dei throughout the world. Through the effort to put Christian principles to work in the world, and through the desire to help those of all races and creeds, those who have put so much time into running the House over the past 25 years can now look back and not fail to be pleased at the results.

Pleased we may be, but we remain aware that the espousal of such ideals implies ever greater effort and commitment of time. The first 25 years has been a tremendous beginning and I return to my message of eleven years ago, that we believe that the work of Netherhall House will go on from strength to strength, to give help and encouragement to all who have the good fortune to live there, or to be in any way connected with the House.

London, November 1977



The Speech of
Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth
the Queen Mother
at the Opening
of
the New Buildings
on
1st November 1966

It is often said that we live in an age of challenge, and I find it inspiring to visit Netherhall House today, because this new building exemplifies the successful acceptance of such a challenge.

Despite all that the modern state provides by way of social service, there are still vital needs for which we must rely on private initiative if they are to be properly met. One such need is for residential accommodation for university students, especially those from overseas. As Chancellor of the University of London, this need is a thing specially near to my heart. For London, with its unrivalled academic facilities, is a magnet which few can resist, and students flock here from all corners of the earth. Unfortunately, large cities can be unfriendly and inhospitable places until you get to know their ways. It is therefore particularly important that students who come here for the first time should find a home where they are sure of a welcome.

Mr Audley has used the words 'home' and 'family' when speaking of Netherhall House, and this seems to express a vital element of your work here. The word 'family' immediately brings to mind the mutual respect and support, the sharing of interests and responsibilities, and the friendliness, which typify family life and which are indispensable to student life at its best. A home is a sure base from which it is possible to venture into the world, without fear of being lost in the wilderness—the base to which it is a joy and relief to return, and from which have grown the beliefs and standards which remain throughout one's life. I cannot imagine a better place to foster such standards than Netherhall House, which is based on Christian traditions—above all on the tradition of service.

I am delighted to hear that those who enjoy the splendid facilities of this Centre are fully aware that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and are trying to share their talents and skills with those less fortunate than themselves. May all who live and work here be inspired to make some contribution to the societies in which they live, in whatever part of the world their chosen careers may lead them. In confident hope for the future of this enterprise, I have now much pleasure in declaring Netherhall House open.

Elizabeth R

November 1st
1966

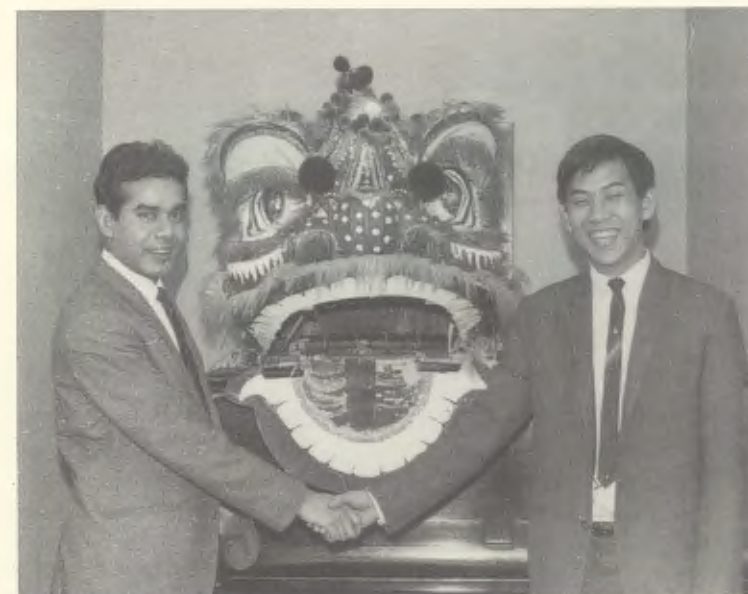
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Mgr. Josemaria Escrivá de Balaguer, the Founder of Opus Dei, followed the progress of Netherhall with great affection and interest. In 1966 in an interview with Tad Szulc of the *New York Times* he said, referring to university residences run by Opus Dei in England, *Netherhall House in London is perhaps especially interesting because of its marked international character. Students from more than fifty countries have lived there. Many of them are non-Christian, since the Centres of Opus Dei are open to all without any racial or religious discrimination. (Conversations with Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, 56).*

In the photograph, he is seen with Santos, Joseph, Dick, Stephen, Pablo and Fr. Cormac. The photograph was taken in the summer of 1961, when the plans for the New Buildings had just come out. Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer was always a man of great heart and wide vision. As he said on another occasion, *Opus Dei feels as much at home in England as in Kenya, in Nigeria as in Japan, in the United States as in Austria, in Ireland as in Mexico or Argentina. (Conversations . . . 42).*

A WORD ABOUT NETHERHALL



Netherhall House began on 4 April 1952 in a house at No. 18 Netherhall Gardens from which it took its name. It was Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, the Founder of Opus Dei, who had encouraged the members of Opus Dei, then in its infancy in Britain, to set up a residence for university students.

The purpose of Netherhall is obvious to anyone who has had anything to do with the house. It is less easy to put in writing.

The house is attractive and homely. On entering, you can immediately tell it is not an institution. If it weren't for its size, you would say its tone reminded one of home, a place where one feels cared for, understood; where one can relax, and find encouragement. In a word, friendship. That was one of the first things I felt about Netherhall on my first visit in 1962: you didn't have to put on a show, you could relax. But at the same time it had nothing to do with a student commune: no cigarette ends, or empty bottles of beer decorating the floor. There were people caring to keep standards high, tidying things away, just as one's mother would do at home (to, let's admit it, one's annoyance from time to time, but also with the realisation that such order was good and necessary).

Little is done in common. There is no herding. There are many activities at Netherhall, but virtually none of them are 'crowd' activities. There is immense freedom and respect for individual choice. But that is not the same as indifference about what people think and like. The house is based on an ideal of service and this ideal finds its way to everyone, no matter what race, religion or background. Everyone feels encouraged to improve. I remember my tutor at university saying that a good tutor is always trying to get 5% more out of a student than he feels like giving. Something similar could be said of Netherhall. Residents always see they could give a little more. But how they do this is very much left to them, to their own responsibility.





What has been achieved in 25 years? It is worthwhile remembering the beginnings. In 1952, Opus Dei had been in Britain barely five years. The first members were students as were their friends. The idea of starting a residence must have appeared crazy. Finance was short, then, as it has been ever since. Netherhall was bought, and the new Netherhall built, thanks to years of sacrifice and hard work by many people, members of Opus Dei and friends, Catholics and non-Catholics and men of no religion whatsoever. One can certainly talk of the development of Netherhall itself. It has grown much since those early days (though there is still much to be done). But this is not the heart of the matter: much more important are the people who have passed through the residence, people of over a hundred nations, who are now working the world over and trying to put into practice the ideal of service through work well done which they developed in Netherhall.

Some of the results are visible, residences for students and clubs have been set up by people who have passed through Netherhall: the Netherhall Boys Club, Greygarth Hall in Manchester, Kelston Club in South London spring immediately to mind. One can talk about men from Netherhall who have gone abroad, to countries like Kenya, Nigeria, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, with the idea of serving their fellow men. But though this is a constant and continuing aspect of Netherhall, it would be false to say that setting up clubs, or service overseas was its essence. Netherhall is equally interested in helping a medical student who will become a surgeon in a northern city of Britain to work well: the fruits here are less easy to quantify, but not less important. Or a Kenyan, now curing eye infections of thousands of Africans. Or a Russian scientist, doing competent work in his country, even though he might have been a professed atheist and spent but a short time in Netherhall.

Fashions come and go. In the 60s, it became fashionable to help the 'developing' nations of the 'Third World'. The fashion passed. But Netherhall has continued its interest in those countries, regardless of how 'developing' they might be considered. It has continued because it is not bound by fashion but by a commitment to a more permanent ideal, of service.

Similarly, there have been many people of intellectual excellence in Netherhall. But again, they have never been the exclusive concern of the residence. The spirit that is breathed in Netherhall is that everyone counts, regardless of his I.Q. As in any well constituted family, all the children count, not just the bright ones. And at the same time, the parents wish all their children to do well, to push themselves to the limit of their capabilities.

I have not referred to religion. But of course one of the first things people notice about Netherhall is that it has an oratory, which is the finest room in the house. At times people ask: 'What's behind it all? I can see this service, friendship, sacrifice, cheerfulness... but what's behind it?'. At this stage, one might get a little bashful, though the answer is clear to those who run the residence and who have helped to establish the ideals of the House, as it is to residents who have been there for some time and who care to find out—it is the continued effort to live the Christian virtues, based on a deep faith and love of God which automatically leads to an understanding of everyone irrespective of their beliefs and race.



And the next 25 years? The kernel will be: 'business as usual', since the central message of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer is that it is ordinary, everyday work which has to be done well, sanctified. Given this, each of us can and should dream. Many former residents are now married with growing families and their dreams often go in the direction of setting up schools which echo the ideals of Netherhall. Others would like to see this spirit operating at home and abroad, on the factory floor, in the board room, in the universities or among those who work on the land or travel the seas. The Founder of Opus Dei would often say: *'Dream, and your dreams will fall short.'* But he would add that those dreams will only come true with prayer and effort, with work well done: *'an hour of study for a modern apostle is an hour of prayer'* (The Way, 97).

The realisation of our dreams for the next 25 years depends on how generously each of us puts into practice those ideals, realised during the stay at Netherhall House, but which have to be applied with constancy for the rest of our lives.



When No. 18 Netherhall Gardens was acquired in 1952 and the university residence of Netherhall House set up, it was Michael Richards who became the first director, or, as in fun we sometimes used to call him, the Warden, with its obvious overtones of being a strict disciplinarian. The truth is of course that he managed to get us residents to do things without any form of coercion or pressure other than his own personal ability to make you feel responsible for the appearances of the house you live in. We are told that, later, in the 60's and 70's he continued to do the same at the Chaplaincy of the University of Bangor, where he was Chaplain from 1961 until his sudden death, in the summer of 1977.

As far as I know there were no other international and intercollegiate student residences in London at that time, but the good academic results obtained were a good advertisement for such an establishment. The experience of Opus Dei in running University residences in Spain, Italy and Portugal, was of course invaluable, and both Fr. John Galarraga and Michael Richards had had first hand experience of them. Fr. John, who was ordained in 1953, was in an unobtrusive way very much the soul of Netherhall House from then until 1961.

Engineering, Law, and Medicine, were perhaps the most represented careers. Names that easily come to mind are Ron Winstanley, Ray MacIntyre and Peter Haverty. There were also always a number of overseas students who, apart from doing their studies, contributed significantly to the life of the residence. Santos Amer, who later went to Kenya, and Andrew Vazquez come to mind. Also Dr Saito, and, in later years, people such as Hassan Mostafavi and Thomas Poh. Netherhall House ran international Summer Courses with only a sprinkling of postgraduate students and others who would help out with the English language teaching. Clive Ashby and Chris Johnson are two among those involved with this important dimension of Netherhall. With small variations, the story has been repeated ever since.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Netherhall expanded quickly when in 1953, No. 16 Netherhall Gardens was acquired as was The Cottage (now the home of Netherhall Boys Club), a smaller building in between No. 16 and No. 18. In October 1956 Dick Stork took over from Michael as director. Dick, a graduate in engineering from London University and renowned for his expertise at sports, was here for five years, continuing the same tradition, but finding most things already well established, and the finances on a firm footing thanks to his predecessor. It was during this period that Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer first began to spend his summers in England. And just as the original project of Netherhall House had been initiated through his encouragement so too he now set us on course to put up new and adequate buildings both for the students and for the domestic staff who had quietly provided all the services men too easily take for granted.

Building itself did not begin until the Summer of 1964, and by that time Vladimir Felzmann had taken over as director. Vlad, as he is known to all, became director in 1961, and as a graduate in civil engineering from Imperial College, was able to lend his expertise to the initial stages of the construction of the New Buildings.

The first half of the sixties at Netherhall was a time of development and transition. On the one hand there was increased contact with schoolboys, especially Sixth Formers, and courses, seminars and so on were organised to bridge the gap between School and University. On the other hand, first the drawings and then the actual building of the New Block got under way and Ramon Doderó, the Architect and later Boro, whose paintings of such varied styles grace the walls of the Residence, settled down to make the dream a reality. Netherhall took on an ever greater intercontinental colour. Residents from all over the Commonwealth started to arrive in far greater numbers and the capacity of 'Nethers', as it is often called by some of its friends, also increased, once the top floor of No. 16 was available. Evening Speakers became a regular feature and many 'personalities' came to meet the Students. Then in September 1965 Bob Farrell took over as Director and it was his task to prepare the New buildings for the Royal Opening in 1966.

Bob, a Scot from Glasgow and a lecturer in Biochemistry at Chelsea College, was at the centre of the hive of activity to put the finishing touches to the New Building. The last stone was the marble plaque in the entrance hall, unveiled by the Queen Mother in 1966. Some of the people involved in setting up the new buildings were Fr. Cormac Burke, Joseph Sellars, Mr Belton, the architect from Murray Ward and Partners, Ramon Doderó and, of course, the building firm Robert Moss. The Netherhall Educational Association, an educational charity, was set up in 1964 and was responsible, among other things, for carrying through

the project. A G.L.C. mortgage plus a grant from the British Council had helped in establishing the financial basis as well as other grants, covenants and donations from the City, industry, business, trusts, foundations, official bodies and numerous private individuals like Mr & Mrs Engelhard. Gratitude is due to the trustees and members of the Management Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr Bernard Audley, for their help, effort, guidance and encouragement throughout the years. With the approach of the date of the official opening of the new buildings there was a great deal to be done. Many people helped—residents, relatives and friends so as to leave everything ready for the opening on November 1st 1966 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. The day went well with no hitches. The Queen Mother was shown the New Buildings and had tea with the residents. The cameras were there and coverage that evening by B.B.C. Television completed a memorable day in the history of Netherhall.

Although the number of students at Netherhall had now risen to over 100, the family atmosphere still remained, and at the same time the residents enjoyed the excellent new facilities—the study-room, the seminar rooms for tutorials and meetings, the auditorium with seating for 140 people, the oratory, the dining-room and coffee lounge with accompanying roof garden. Both those who still lived in the Victorian House—that is to say, No. 18, because by this time No. 16 had been leased to the American Community School—and also those who lived in the single study-bedrooms of the New Building, used the same centralised facilities which enabled everyone to get to know each other very quickly.

In October 1967, John Henry took over as director. John—like Vlad, a former resident of Netherhall, and also first director of Kelston Boys Club in Wandsworth—gave up his job in medicine to become Netherhall's fifth director. During this period, John's kidney problem became more serious. The result was the installation of the kidney machine on the first floor. The buzzer on his door became a familiar sound in Netherhall, as resident after resident visited him whilst he was on dialysis. Despite his ailment, his cheerfulness was infectious and all his energy was put into the life of the residence. It was a tremendous joy for Mr Burns, Netherhall's plumber for many years, when in 1976 he was able to undo the work he had carried out almost ten years previously and re-convert the dialysis room into a bathroom after John's successful transplant operation. His joy was shared by one and all.

John was helped a great deal by Philip Sherrington who succeeded him in 1969. Philip, a graduate in Physics at Manchester University, originates from Middlesborough. At present Fr. Philip Sherrington is the counsellor of Opus Dei in Britain. Steve Doyle, another doctor and former resident of Netherhall took the reins during the summer 1970 until Stephen Reynolds took over that autumn.

Stephen Reynolds and his successor, Jim Mirabal, both studied at Oxford. Stephen was for many years Secretary of the Netherhall Development Committee. Jim, a mathematician like his successor Bernard Marsh, is now actively involved in promoting the fund-raising for the house.



Ramon Doderó, the architect of the new buildings, inspecting the works.

Although the arrival of new directors helps to pinpoint certain events in the history of Netherhall House, the director never runs the house on his own. The organisation and decision-making are always done collegially by the Directors Committee, who devote all their energy to serving the residents. Names such as Laurence Richardson, Mike Shanks, Andrew Sydel, Bill Boardman, Neil Pickering, Clifford Cobb, are all familiar to many old residents. In the 70's, the latter three worked to establish a thriving Club for Schoolboys restructuring and redecorating the Cottage with the help of residents and parents to provide a wide range of activities.

Neither would Netherhall run smoothly without the effort of some who have come to be very much a part of the big family which is Netherhall; whether it is the skill of Miss Morrissey who keeps the delicate balance of payments in our favour, or the care for material details of the Maintenance Engineer, Mr Gibson, not to forget the dedication of Mr Lambert who has turned the garden into a delight which passers-by never fail to stop to admire.

As the outside, so the inside of Netherhall is flourishing. Since 1977 a reredos has graced the oratory, which has always been the most important room in the residence. The warmth and homeliness of the House continues to attract many people and with the help of the Netherhall House Trust and former residents it is hoped not only to continue but to expand the work of Netherhall.

RESIDENTS, PAST & PRESENT



When we look back in time, people and events seem to telescope and it is not always easy to determine who was around when they happened. For those of us who have followed closely the developments at Netherhall House over the last 25 years, it is a source of joy to recall names and characters of past residents and hear of their whereabouts and progress through life. In relation to the whole period, their stay in Netherhall was short, but it is nice when we hear their recollections and the value they give to those formative years of their life.

Ray McIntyre can perhaps be given the first place in the list of applicants, for he heard of the plans to set up a residence from the then Chaplain to the Catholics in the University of London, Mgr. Gordon Wheeler, in September 1951, and wanted to come, even though the house had not even been found yet. By the time the first residents were admitted, in the last term of that

academic year, he had booked himself for that period at his digs, but lived in Netherhall the first full academic session. He is now in Berkeley, and always comes to see us when he passes through London. He is also in touch in California with other similar ventures of Opus Dei.

Among the more numerous group that lived in Netherhall House in 1953/54 (for No. 16 Netherhall Gardens had been also acquired by then), one could recall Dr Leslie Noronha, a postgraduate at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He wrote when he heard about our new Netherhall House project, encouraging us and adding that the year he spent there 'was probably one of the happiest of his life'. He had by then branched off to journalism, within medicine, and his letters attested his ability to express his gratitude.



Key to the above photograph of December 1953

- 1 Uchiyama
- 2 Santos Amer
- 3 John Lepere
- 4 Brian Mahoney
- 5 Austin Winckley
- 6 Dick Stork
- 7 Michael Richards
- 8 Moises Riano
- 9 Fr John Galarraga
- 10 Peter Haverty
- 11 Richard Alarcon
- 12 Brian Cassidy
- 13 Bernard Gonsalves
- 14 Frank Wearden
- 15 John McArthur
- 16 Denis Kelly
- 17 Tony Moorhouse
- 18 John O'Keefe
- 19 John Turner
- 20 Kevin Taylor

It would of course be impossible to mention everyone who has passed through during this quarter of a century, especially if one realises the intensive Summer Courses held every year, which provided a welcome although rather noisy, change from the winter studies. Teaching English to foreign students could be great fun, and many lasting friendships were formed not only as a result of the classes, but also in the playing fields and visiting the London Monuments, Oxford Colleges, and many other excursions.

I do not know how an influence can be measured or quantified, but going through the lists of all past Catholic residents there are more than 25 who should now be addressed as 'Reverend Father'. And all of them would agree that the facilities provided in the residence were a great help in the formation of their characters and of their decisions to serve God in this way.

The vast majority of course have followed the careers for which they studied at University, and most of them are happily married. The visitors book often records a double signature of names that a few years earlier had appeared often enough on notice boards, or telephone messages.

Mr and Mrs Halmai, for instance, makes us remember Joseph, the student of Economics who had fled from Hungary in 1956. After a few months in Netherhall House, recovering from the shock, while studying at L.S.E., he turned out to be such fun, fenced for his College, and was able to help other Hungarians who had been less fortunate.

It is always interesting to compare the different characters and temperaments, which, of course, varied enormously, even within the same racial or regional characteristics. Take the two Alberts, Quayson and Quainoo, the first two residents from Ghana in the late fifties: the talkative engineering student with a polished English accent—he had been at Saint Joseph's Beulah Hill; and the ever smiling doctor, who would suddenly come out with the most amusing remarks.

As for 'characters' there has been no dearth of them; but for extroverts, I think Sergio takes the palm. He certainly helped a lot to get large discounts from firms on a number of items for the residence, using his persuasive selling techniques. And he too, if you

mention the subject, will 'sell you' Netherhall describing in great detail the enormous benefits he received while he was in or around Netherhall House. After teaching for a while in Barcelona he married an Australian girl and is now 'down under'.

A character of a different type was Dr Winstanley in the early fifties. Apart from being a nippy winger a-la-Matthews, and apart from his Lancashire humour, I will always remember him carrying a coal scuttle into the lounge, supplementing the economy heating which Michael Richards, the director then, would apply from time to time. They were coke boilers in those days of pre-smokeless-fuel London, and the smog at times had to be seen to be believed. Ron was then studying Medicine after having qualified in Dentistry, and is now a well established consultant oral surgeon in Manchester. He, of course, was delighted when Opus Dei set up a centre in the Northwest, and he was—and still is—the Warden of Greygarth a licensed Hall of Residence of the University of Manchester.

Generations of Summer Course lads from all Europe always ask for Cornelius O'Leary and his great enthusiasm for Volleyball. For indeed a bit of semi-organised sport has always been a good rallying point for comradeship, as well as a welcome rest from the more serious side of studies. He is a lecturer at Queens College in Belfast, and as an expert on elections—which is the subject of the thesis he wrote while at Netherhall—has appeared in the Press and Television commenting on the Northern Ireland situation.

Another lecturer now—this time in the Department of Physics in Singapore—is Augustine Chong; he has kept in touch and often welcomed travellers to other countries in the Far East, such as the Philippines, where a similar work to that of Netherhall is being carried out by Opus Dei. I will always remember Augustine confiding his bewilderment at the fact that some tough young chaps in the morning seemed to prefer a cold shower: being an observant man he had noticed that no 'smoke' would seem to come from their sprays! Cold showers or not I think many of us have to acknowledge that the influence of the environment of Netherhall House, while offering protection, toughened us up.





To say that a university hall of residence is a place to live whilst studying, is, on the face of it, stating the obvious. Yet perhaps the single most important aspect of all the activity of Netherhall is the study-work done by those who live there. What residents see is the incarnation of the teaching of the Founder of Opus Dei, that *'study — any professional development — is a serious obligation for us'* (*The Way*, 334) and this is a reality everyone experiences and, in time, understands and appreciates.

The House has always tried to provide the necessary physical facilities to help those who come to study. The main study room, both when in No. 18 and now in the centre of the new building, has witnessed thousands of hours of work at all academic levels from A levels to doctorates. Conversations between the directors and residents stress the importance of using the study facilities and encourage the respect of the minor regulations designed to help other people study. Without this encouragement, the excellent facilities could remain merely an ornate but empty shell.

This stimulus to study is, however, by no means the prerogative of those who run the House, because the atmosphere of study is set primarily by the residents themselves. Those who have been in the House longer give example and inspiration to others. They set the tone and also the standard to be reached, and through chats over coffee, and via more formal tutorials, the older residents help the younger ones with their study, ironing out any difficulties which may occur. Given the broad range of talents of the residents there is normally someone with experience in one particular field of study who can help his fellow student. Where Netherhall House differs from many other places, is that this help is given gladly and spontaneously through the bond of friendship which is cemented when the residents absorb the spirit of service fostered by the House.

STUDY

Yet equally Netherhall would never be content to produce a 'boffin': someone whose absorption in his work results in cutting himself off from others. That is why the family life of Netherhall, where each person is expected to take an interest in the others, is of paramount importance. Thus students see that though they may be finishing some very important work which keeps them in their study room or in the main library for many hours a day, this cannot isolate them from their fellow residents. On the contrary, the friendly encouragement and demonstrations of interest they receive give a strong impulse to return to their studies, without which they would each be less effective.

Nevertheless, times of intense study are needed to make the 'break-through' at various stages in an academic career. Some people do this by studying throughout the night in long vigils in the study room. Others prefer to rise early in order to get in more hours whilst fresh. This fever comes to the fore especially during the term after Easter when most examinations take place. Another solution to the need for intense study takes the form of organised reading parties or study weekends. Grandpont House, Oxford, and Wickenden Manor in Sussex have been the venue for numerous such weekends from Netherhall. Everyone who has been on such a trip is agreed on their effectiveness. They also provide an often much needed break from the metropolis, and a chance to get to know people better. This is all the more welcome as these weekends ensure that the break does not interrupt the rhythm of study but rather increases it.

Academic work, study, is not the only type of activity associated with Netherhall. Rest is necessary, yet as the Founder of Opus Dei wrote: *'to rest is not to do nothing; it is to relax with activities that require less effort'* (*The Way*, 357). Especially when you are engaged in intellectual work, the best rest can often be in the form of doing some manual work. Residents in Netherhall have all benefitted from that healthy tradition of caring for the material aspect of the House. This is often great fun and can be a real help to the House. Such was the case when three residents spent a Bank Holiday weekend renewing the electrical wiring of the Old House. Not every resident of Netherhall has the opportunity or know-how to get involved in such a major project but most have helped in some way. Their work given freely and gladly has helped not only to maintain the appearance and material standard of the house but also to further the element of identity with Netherhall. They truly see it as their own home which they look after well because they want to.

Thus, work and study play a primordial role in the life of Netherhall. No one hides the fact that often the effort required is one of going 'against the grain'—to persevere against one's own laziness, real tiredness and an atmosphere amongst one's colleagues which often encourages one to seek the easy way out. What the House does is to provide a framework to help one 'pull through' these difficulties. That cynical question 'Why, bother?' can be answered with a positive view of life, and the abundant fruit of the study of hundreds of residents amply demonstrates this.

Small wonder that in the main lounge, the inscription round the tapestry (done by the students themselves) reads 'Frater qui adiuatur a fratre quasi civitas firma', a brother helped by his brother is as strong as a walled city. This serves to remind everyone that the mutual help found in the House is the great attraction of Netherhall and enables everyone to gain the most out of his university life.

Over the past twenty five years there has been an increasing number of students from overseas. They often come to London seeking specialized, professional training in subjects such as accountancy and law, which offer courses combining practical training with intensive periods of study to prepare students for professional qualifications. To these students Netherhall offers a great advantage not enjoyed by many of their colleagues. After a day at the office, often made more tiring by a rush-hour journey he finds himself at home where he can soon unwind whilst being re-invigorated by the interest and encouragement he finds, to undertake some hours of study. In this way they are helped to see that the opportunity of studying abroad is a privilege which brings with it the responsibility of serious work.



ADVICE AND IDEALS

Residents at Netherhall House soon come to realise that the atmosphere of friendship and freedom that they find here is not an accident, but something which runs very deep in all who make up the residence. The house is run in the belief that only in an atmosphere of freedom can people hope to develop their full potential. Thus, apart from a minimum of regulations which are required to ensure an orderly timetable and other domestic arrangements, residents are expected to make up their own minds and follow up their own initiatives. But fostering freedom does not mean indifference. Residents know that they can receive advice and encouragement from those who direct the residence. In addition, Netherhall has a Chaplain who is available to students of all denominations for any advice or encouragement they may need in the spiritual life.



At a very basic level, the principles behind the advice given are that man is a *rational* animal, a human being who reasons and feels desires of a spiritual nature, even though often the material cares and the pressures of society tend to stifle that most important aspect of his life. Man has an ultimate purpose in life and the Chaplain is there to help people discover that purpose, or find it again if they have lost sight of it.

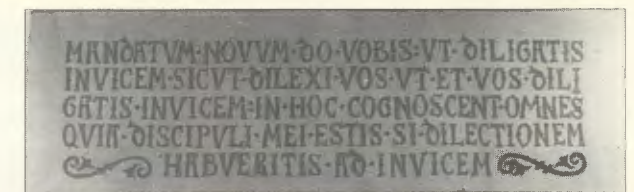
The Chaplain's function is not limited to a passive role of waiting for 'customers' to knock at his door, even though many do go, taking advantage that he is available and at hand. The Catholics, in particular, also find it convenient to receive the Sacrament of Penance from him either in his room or at the times he is available in the Confessional.

However, the more obvious and active participation of the Chaplain in the life of the residence is to be seen in the religious functions that centre around the oratory. There is daily Mass in the morning and family Rosary in the evening, which is followed by Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on Saturdays and special feasts. On Sundays and on big occasions such as Christmas, Easter and so on, there will be a homily or meditation explaining their significance. Once a week there is a conference or meditation, which is a form of directed prayer. This is why the chapel, where they are normally held, is usually called the oratory (from the Latin 'orare', to pray), for essentially it is a place where people go to pray.

The Chaplain is often called upon to give short courses of lectures in the lounge on some aspect of the Christian Faith, or the History of the Church or ethics. To give an opportunity to those who wish to deepen their spiritual relationship with God, days of recollection are organised monthly in the residence and retreats are given at Wickenden Manor, a conference centre in Sussex.



There is in all this a great respect for people's freedom. They may take whatever advantage of it they wish. And yet it is clear that we all should feel a concern for the welfare of others, which ultimately is the true goal of their freedom, and help them not to get side tracked or 'hooked' by fads and customs, which at best make them waste their time and energy, which could be spent on higher things.



Wall plaque in the study room.

I have a new commandment to give you, that you are to love one another; that your love for one another is to be like the love I have borne you. The mark by which all men will know you for my disciples will be the love you bear one another. (John 13:34, 35)

Spiritual development, the development of one's true personality, demands ideals, that need to be reset and redirected, and a constant battle against the forces of friction that would slow down our progress through life. The purpose of the guidance the Chaplain seeks to give can be summarised in the words of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer when he visited Netherhall House in the summer of 1958: *'you must teach and encourage the residents to administer their own freedom'*.

Freedom is a precious gift, which needs to be exercised by a constant choosing the best course of action. We all know that what we have obtained as a result of friendly advice, given in general or in particular, is something that in later years we are often very grateful for.

ACTIVITIES THROUGH 25 YEARS

If a survey were carried out amongst those 6th formers about to enter University and they were asked 'What does University Education mean to you?', a wide variety of answers would probably be given. Many might talk only about their particular field of study—I want to become a good medieval historian, or I want to spend my whole time delving into subharmonic functions. Others may talk about the tremendous social life they expect. A few more may go further and outline the wider significance of this education which should broaden their horizons and lead to a rounded development of their personality, a chance to meet many ideas and people and to gain from both.

That university education means more than just producing 'brains on stilts' needs to be learned however, and many students need to be helped to discover this, to break the confines of their specialised discipline and to climb down from their ivory tower. This is why Netherhall organises such a wide range of activities, which provide a great stimulus to the life of the House. In the 25 years of Netherhall, everything from Computer Science Seminars to Piano recitals, from Industrial Relations to Problems in Drug Addiction, from Shakespeare drama series to Chinese language tuition, has been organised. Many are the result of the initiative of the students themselves, sometimes via their House Committee; at other times the Management Committee arranges the events.



Christopher Chataway



Hammond Innes



Henry Cooper

One such fortnightly event is the talk or discussion given by a public figure from the world of business, education, sport, etc. As they have all distinguished themselves in their speciality, they can share their experience with the residents and their friends, thus enriching the lives of those in the House and broadening their outlook. However these are never cold formal lectures more appropriate to the college setting of formal teaching. When Netherhall House was still in Number 16 and 18 Netherhall Gardens they took the format of informal fireside talks. This tradition continues in the new buildings where, though set in a centrally-heated lounge with no fireplace, the speakers find themselves in a get-together rather than a lecture.

The guest speakers at Netherhall in the last 25 years would, however, have been quite capable of commanding a lecture-room audience with experienced ease. Some of the leading figures of public life have come to the House. Recent years have seen Sir Richard Marsh, Lord Vic Feather, Sir Reay Geddes, Sir David Barron from the world of industry and commerce. From the world of public and political life, Lord Chalfont, Sir Peter Rawlinson, Lord Harlech, Leo Abse and Sir Trenchard, Cox. The academic and literary world has been abundantly represented, mention merely being needed of a few representatives like Malcolm Muggeridge and Hammond Innes.



Lord Chalfont



Professor Pieper



Malcolm Muggeridge



On a somewhat bigger scale, major one-day Conferences, such as 'Lasting Values and Modern Man' drew notable figures from academic life to talk to large audiences of residents, former residents and members of the public. In this Conference, Professor Josef Pieper, Dr John Finnis and Professor J. Scarisbrick read papers on the importance of moral values and their present day application. Another conference 'Policies and People' examined the extent to which civil authority should and could interfere with the activity of members of society. This was another well attended event where Professor Elizabeth Anscombe and Dr Colin Clark gave thought-provoking papers to a keen audience.

With this as an example, the residents together with the directors committee arrange a good selection of short courses on a wide variety of topics. Take, for example, the yearly How-to-study courses and talks by post-graduates on their speciality—Architecture, Medicine, etc.—which have always been very popular. Prominent speakers may sometimes join these activities; for example a judge may come to preside over the Mock Trial with budding barristers drawn from the ranks of Netherhall's law students, acting as counsel for prosecution and defence. The accused is usually taken from one of the born actors at Netherhall House who on occasions has stolen the show with his adept handling of the inexperienced lawyers.



These events are not restricted to residents of course because in addition to their university friends, sixth formers are invited to get a glimpse of university life which serves to ease the transition from school to university. Sometimes activities are directed solely at the schoolboys—for example the Pre-University courses, and the facilities at Netherhall House—the seminar rooms, lounge, auditorium etc.—enable several activities to take place at the same time. Other events—film-shows in the auditorium, slide shows, talks of a more general nature are open for all to benefit.

When these activities are seen alongside all the other events, such as the sports competitions, excursions, camps, trips abroad and so on, the flavour of the life of Netherhall House begins to emerge. A high standard has been set during the past 25 years, and thanks must go to the residents for helping to achieve this. It has set the pattern for the future and it is the task of all future residents to continue the good work.



A Show put on by Residents for Old People.

NETHERHALL BOYS CLUB



Snugly seated between two large Victorian houses of Netherhall Gardens is 'The Cottage', home of Netherhall Boys Club. Adopting the ideals of the Residence, something more than the word 'club' could connote emerges: NBC, as it is known to its members, is very much an extension of the boys' own home. It aims to further the education in human virtues, to contribute to the development of the boys' personality and to create an atmosphere in which everyone can learn to make the best use of his free time whilst feeling very much at home.

For each boy, the club represents something more than a mere centre of education, a place which broadens his outlook by providing formative pursuits. True, activities such as guitar tuition, printing, photography, medical seminars, are all important, but for the boy the club means much more than this. It provides a setting where he can feel accepted and cared for, a place to meet new friends and to learn to get on with others. Mutual understanding, accepting the likes and dislikes of others, learning give and take in relationships is an important emphasis in the club.

If he were asked to describe 'Netherhall Boys Club' a member might not refer immediately to the sport he plays or to the hovercraft he was helping to build, because to do so would be to miss the kernel of the matter. He would probably talk about his friend Paul who teaches the guitar, the amusing incidents related over high tea, chatting with the leader about his school and his interests, the atmosphere at the get-together.

This atmosphere, with a spirit of service to others and a noticeable lack of negative criticism, is something which attracts boys from as far afield as Ipswich, over sixty miles away. Membership is not restricted to those who live locally, but is open to boys from all schools in and even outside London, sometimes travelling well over an hour to reach the Cottage. For some, it means getting up

at the crack of dawn on a Saturday to arrive at the Cottage for a full morning study session, helped by university graduates and undergraduates from the Residence. Silence reigns until lunch, after which activities begin—some of the more energetic members play on the 5-a-side football pitch before joining the others assembling the newly acquired printing machine or dissecting various specimens in the Medical Science room. At 5 o'clock, most gather round the radio to listen to the football results and bemoan or rejoice over their club's defeat or victory. This leads in to the weekly talk from the chaplain before preparations for High Tea begin. The evening is then centered on the get-together which may take the form of impromptu speeches, charades, music or just talking about the events of the day, or life at school. Then the most difficult part comes in ensuring they have all left by the appointed hour to give them ample time to return to their homes, full of the events of the day.

This provides a very quick picture of the Senior Section (those over 14). Parallel to the morning study session for this age-group, runs the Junior Section (11-13 year olds). There are similar activities, with the addition of model railway construction, scalextric and kite flying, but all condensed into Saturday morning. The boys put their all into the shorter period, and emerge with only one regret: that it was not longer. One of the first talks of course is on 'Patience'.

Their desire for a longer period is met on the camps which are organised with regularity to sites all over Great Britain and, for those a little older, to the Continent. This year, the largest ever contingent went on the annual Easter trip to Rome—49 people in four minibuses, joining other similar clubs in England, and staying at houses run by Opus Dei in France, Switzerland and Italy. For almost everyone, this is a trip of a lifetime—not just because they see different countries and beautiful cities, but also because of the chance to have a special audience with the Pope, a get-together with the President General of Opus Dei, and the opportunity to develop strong friendships with fellow-travellers which may last a life time.

The long trips are complemented by shorter ones, sometimes to a country house or cottage which might have been generously loaned by a parent or a cooperator of Opus Dei. In addition to the boys' enjoyment of the trips, this arrangement helps the parents to see that they too form part of the boys club; that the club is there to complement the work of the family and that parents can help in a variety of ways. This was seen clearly in the organisation and running of the Christmas bazaar—eager parents came every week to prepare items for sale and the bazaar was a great success—not just financially, but in terms of the help and team work of the parents. Other parents with a particular skill, may even want to run an activity such as the electronics section or the film-making division. This all serves to make NBC something different from many other 'clubs' and all we hope for is that it will grow in this way for many years to come, continuing to form good and strong citizens for the future.



THE RESIDENCE TODAY

And what is Netherhall today? Certainly it is not perfectly finished, realising the full potential that the Founder of Opus Dei had in mind when he encouraged his sons in the early fifties to open the House. His appreciation of what could and should be done in and through Netherhall House is something tremendously profound, springing from that union he had, and now has *in aeternum*, with God. How many of us who have been in contact with Netherhall House have ever suspected these depths? Few indeed. Yet many have caught a glimpse of what could be done. Their generous response has involved, and involves hours of patient work, solving all the problems and difficulties of the sort Netherhall House shares with all worth-while projects. Those hours, thousands of them, are not wasted.

A short story could help to explain the spirit in which these hours were spent. During the planning of the new buildings a group of M.P.s were working on a particular planning problem of Netherhall House at the House of Commons. The division bell sounded and they stopped a moment considering the need to interrupt their work to vote. When they discovered that they were divided equally between the parties and that their absence would not alter the outcome of the vote, they decided to stay and continue working on the Netherhall House plans. Such has been the way people have come to identify themselves with the idea.

Today no less than before there are those who continue to work in various ways on the Netherhall venture. And if any task merits the title 'on-going' this one does. Even when the second

stage of the new buildings is completed and working there will be plenty to do for all those in contact with the House.

But what about today? In a magazine designed to mark 25 years of Netherhall it would be inappropriate to dwell extensively on the situation of 1977. True, times change and various different fashions can be detected in the general response to students from overseas coming to London to study. Gone perhaps forever are the conditions of the mid-sixties when the new block was being financed and built. Very different too is the climate which prevailed in University circles in 1952 when Netherhall first opened its doors. Happily the House takes all the changes in its stride, because the foundation stones of the House are the solid everlasting ideals of service to others in an atmosphere of freedom linked with personal responsibility. Such material is not susceptible to erosion by the variety of superficial changes which time brings, and they owe their presence to Monsignor Escrivá de Balaguer who wanted all the centres of Opus Dei to give everyone an opportunity to find a place where he was accepted and cared for, and where he could learn to give himself to others in the Christian ideal of service.

This is how it has always been and how it will continue. External fashions and trends may come and go but the spirit and reality of Netherhall remains the same. We owe a great debt of thanks for these ideals and inspirations to the Founder of Opus Dei—and he with his characteristic humility would refer all to the glory of God.



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LETTERS FROM FORMER RESIDENTS

Peter Nyot Kok (*The Sudan*)

I would like to seize this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for the most gentle and friendly attitude you have shown to me. I certainly regard all this as a valuable enrichment of my experience in the U.K. in the face of which I have not yet found how to express my thankfulness adequately.

Alexis Affonso (*England*)

I always will look back on my stay at Netherhall House as some of the most enjoyable days I've spent in London. The enjoyment I gained from things like 'Chinese New Year', 'Bonfire Night', 'Mock Trial', 'Sunday football', etc . . . shall not be forgotten. My first two terms in London were made very smooth for me and I must thank you most sincerely for aiding this.

Andrew Nasinda & Paul Mulenga (*Zambia*)

Paul and I wish to thank you most sincerely for the kindness with which you received us during the three months of our stay at Netherhall House. The cordial reception of which we were always assured and the exceptional atmosphere of friendliness made it possible for us to complete our studies. Indeed it is a great pleasure to write this note to say 'many thanks'. And we shall always be inclined to look back with feelings of deep appreciation.

Norris Branch (*Scarborough*)

One outstanding feature of Netherhall is its international aspect . . . of equal significance is the high regard and confidence you place in the residents.