

The early years remembered

By Richard Stork

On the 4th April, 1952, Friday, just before Holy Week, we moved into Netherhall House. The first students came to Netherhall via adverts in *The Tablet* and recommendations from the University of London Catholic Chaplain. **Michael Richards** was the director and had things well organised. One of the first residents, **Dominic Swanson** was studying the organ. This first term of the residence already welcomed overseas students, and included a more mature research student from Japan, **Paul (Kinichiro) Saito**, and **Michael Britomutunayagan**, a Tamil from what was then Ceylon, studying civil engineering at Northampton Engineering College. Both stayed on for the next year.

1952-53

In the first full academic year there was a good intake of English and overseas students. **Ray MacIntyre** was at Northampton Engineering College, doing electrical engineering. In the residence, I shared a room for the first term with **John Neil Clarke**, who was studying law at King's College, having come up from Rugby School. Later, when the oratory had been moved to the ground floor, the large vacated room was used for a bedroom for three. I was going to share it with Neil and **Tom Foley**, a medical student at St Thomas's, but Neil preferred

to keep the room for two. In the 1990's Neil was featured in the news as head of the Coal Board.

Another resident that year was **Toni Rossi**, studying architecture. To this day he is in regular contact with Neil Clarke. He is married with children and lives in Norwich. There were a few Spanish residents, but those studying at higher educational establishments—rather than just learning English—were preferred. **Agustin Leon Ara**, who studied the violin at the Royal Academy of Music, would practise in the top-floor bathroom. This room had reasonable acoustics and was out of the way. He later married the daughter of Rodriguez, the well known composer of *El Concierto de Aranjuez*. **Denis Kelly** was one of the students Mgr Wheeler, the Chaplain of London University, had recommended to come to Netherhall House even before we had found the house, when it was only known we were planning to have a hall of residence!

John Neil Clarke was called Neil. **John Noel Walsh**, who was big and burly, was called "Santa", as he had been called at school. **John Gabriel Turner** was known as Gabby. They all did well and have had successful careers. All these were studying Law. But **John Brown**, **John Westaway** and **John O'Brien** continued to be called John. **Myles Murphy** was a student at the Slade School of Art. He was commissioned to paint a portrait of

Frank Vanseumeren later on, and he also did a very good portrait of **Andrés Vázquez de Prada** for an exhibition. Somewhere around Netherhall there should be a small painting he donated of a street corner with a lamp, which Andres framed and which was in the Secretary's room of No. 18 for many years.

During the first Christmas in 1952, with only a few residents in the House, Kinichiro Saito was pleasantly surprised to hear the Japanese Navy Song being sung by Andrés Vázquez de Prada from behind a curtain in the lounge. (He had learned it in Spain, but we all thought it was a bit of a hoax—until then.) Kinichiro went to meet **Fr Ray Madurga** when he went to Japan in 1958-1959. Two students from Stonyhurst moved in: **George Taylor**, a medical student, and **Anthony Moorehouse**, studying Food Technology. A few years later as a young Commissioned Officer, Anthony was kidnapped and killed in Egypt during the Suez Crisis of 1956.

That year a more solid dividing wall between the Cottage and the garden of No. 18 was built, and the path alongside it was made by the residents using the bricks of the old wall, broken up with a sledge hammer. This was good exercise for Denis Kelly, **Bernard Gonsalves**, and me. As future civil engineers the three of us supervised "the works".



In this photograph taken in December 1953, there appears a typically laughing Fr John Galarraga, standing between the much taller Santos Amer and Brian Mahoney. On either side of these appears Augustine Fujimoto and a very English and intelligent Jean Marie Lepere. The others on the back row are an elegantly dressed Michael Richards (then director), Peter Haverty and me. Along the other row (seated) are Ricardo de Alarcon, the inseparable John MacArthur and John Callaghan, a reclining Bernard Gonsalves, Frank Wierden and John Westaway. Sitting on the floor in the front row are Cecil Humphery-Smith, Denis Kelly (with a pipe), Anthony Moorhouse, "Gabby" Turner and George Taylor.

1953-54

There was a large intake of students this year. **Peter Haverty**, studying Chemical Engineering at Imperial College, was amongst them. **Ron Winstanley**, who has spent many years in Manchester as a dental surgeon and Warden of Greycarth Hall, was also part of this intake. **Austin Winkley**, a resident then studying architecture at Regent's Polytechnic, is now a well-established architect in Southwark. For the record, **David Pickersgill** should be mentioned. He was a resident while doing articles at a firm of solicitors, which at that time had set up the first "Trust" providing Opus Dei with a legal structure in Britain. A few years after leaving Netherhall, while still working for that firm, David met a tragic end, dying in his lodgings due to a gas leak. **Johann Spalek**, an Austrian, helped to provide a good atmosphere. He studied at LSE along with **Jean Marie Lepere** and **Noel Moloney**, who started together that year. **Augustine Fujimoto**—who was attached to the Japanese Embassy in some way—was doing diplomatic studies.

Apart from **Juanito Santamaría** from Medellín (Colombia), two other Civil Engineering students had come that year: **John Quinlan** repeating a year at I.C. (having studied at Douay College) and **Bernard Gonsalves** from what was then British Guyana. The latter was at King's College. They shared the large room for three on the top floor of No. 18 with me, who, acting as Secretary, tried to keep some control of the lot. **Ray MacIntyre** lived for a while in the residence and then moved out, living in some digs near the Chaplaincy, where he met **Alec Lowenthal** who was in his last year of Civil Engineering at King's and stayed over Easter 1954.

1954-55

Michael Bush was studying music (mainly conducting). He formed a choir among the students and called it the Netherhall Nightingales. That first term we organised a carol-singing expedition going around the Embassies in London. In some cases (notably the Japanese Embassy) they sent us a cheque, telling us not to bother to go and sing. But when in other cases (such as the Mexican Embassy) they gave us spirits, we thought that was for us. The only Japanese student that year was **Joseph Uchiyama** who applied in September 1954, and stayed the whole year. He was studying Economics at L.S.E. Another "overseas" student was **Andrew Gomes**, from British Guyana.

Making use of the greater numbers, a rugby team was organised. Doctor **Tom Henry** from Ireland, a rugby

enthusiast who was then recovering from some illness, acted as coach from the sidelines. It was a successful experience, knitting people together, and creating a good team spirit. But it was with the arrival in the following year, of players like **Terry McClure** and **John Mulholland** that the team took shape. Peter Haverty was the hooker, while I played on the wing. Squash was also a good activity in which many friendships were forged among residents and colleagues. Southwell House had a squash court then in Nutley Terrace, easily available and conveniently near.

1955-56

Father Gonzalo Gonzalez came as chaplain after being ordained, to join **Fr James Planell**, and soon became known as "Father G". A number of Ampleforth residents, who had been sent by Fr Oscar Vanheems, had been accustomed to treat their monks with great respect, but soon people like John Mulholland became the greatest of friends with the chaplain. Other residents that year were **Ray Donnelly**, the **Davison brothers**, **John Hall**, **Peter Lally**, **Christopher Latham**, and **Paul Moverley**. **Peter Grilli**, from Dover, was one of a few students doing articles rather than going to University.

1956-57

I became the director when Michael Richards went to Rome. **Kevin Kelly** arrived at Netherhall in October. **Bernard Howells** was a new resident (he became lecturer in French at King's College), as were **Michael Hamson**, **Rupert Gordon**, **John Irvine**, **Michael Rutland** (I heard him recently on the radio as an expert on Brunei—he had tutored the prince in the '70s after teaching at Shrewsbury School) and **Fred Wusterman**. At the beginning of the second term, in January 1957, two new residents were admitted: **Benjamin Grisewood** and **Ultan Kindelan**. In February there arrived an older student who would make an unmistakable impact over the next few years: **Cornelius O'Leary** from Cork. He was doing "supply teaching" while writing a thesis at Oxford on elections in Northern Ireland.

1957-58

Residents who came for the first time that term were: **Robert Blake James**, **Sean Duggan**, **Charles Harding** (a schoolboy being looked after by his grandmother), **Pat Morrissey**, **Paul Nichols**, **Douglas Pinnington**, **Felix Pooler** (who studied the violin), and **Peter Wells** (who studied painting at the Slade

School of Art). **Ray Donnelly**, a resident since October 1955, became Secretary in 1958

1958-59

New residents were: **Ben Austen**, **David Stirzaker** (long a teacher at St Benedict's School, Ealing), **David Walsh**, brother of Dominic Walsh, who went to Merton College Oxford. When Fr Ray Madurga went to Japan in November 1958, the person who received him at Osaka Airport was Kinichiro Saito who had known Fr Ray when he was a resident at Netherhall House during 1952-1953. Denis Ryan came back to Netherhall after his six-month stay in Aden, while Kevin Kelly left Netherhall for Brazil.

1959-60

Pepe Torregrosa Sellers arrived at the beginning of October 1959, and **John Henry** a little later. I continued as director, and in December Denis Ryan was named secretary. The priest was **Fr Dick Mulcahy**. Among the new residents were **Gerald Della-Porta**, and **Frank Duffy** (studying architecture at the AA). Frank later helped **Ramon Dodero** with the drawings of the "new" (1966) Netherhall buildings. Also arriving then was **Angelo Strinati**, who now has a number of children, lives in Folkestone, and works at the University of Kent in Canterbury.

1960-61

Anthony Battle and **Anthony Cornish** were two new residents who arrived this year and would later go to the Venerable English College in Rome (I used to visit them 3 years later, when I was in Rome). They were ordained priests, and returned to England in the early 1970s. **Roger Nesbitt** also came that year while he was finishing a course at Imperial College. He later became a priest for the Southwark Diocese. **Jonathan de Villiers** studied Drama, and is now living in Toronto. **James MacLoughlin** studied Russian, and later came to the 1995 reunion. Finally, among the new arrivals was **Gerard Ponsford**, a student of medicine.

1961-62

Laurence Richardson came while studying Mathematics at Chelsea. In October, when **Fr Cormac Burke** became the regional vicar of Opus Dei in Britain (and Dick Mulcahy went back to Ireland), I moved with him to Number 16 Netherhall Gardens, then to Orme Court. So ended my happy days at Netherhall House.