

# netherhall newsletter

NUMBER

6



1. Boxing Day 1975

# Mgr. Escriva de Balaguer y Albas

It was in the evening of June 26th 1975, during a week in which everyone was preparing for the summer — some finishing exams and others getting ready for the summer course—that we received that momentous piece of news at Netherhall. Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer, founder of Opus Dei, had died suddenly that day in Rome. Jim Mirabal first heard this from Clive Ashby who telephoned from Barcelona as soon as he heard the news there. It came as a big shock, leaving us feeling numb and sorrowful. The sense of loss was felt most acutely by those who had had the good fortune of meeting Mgr. Escriva personally. But for all of us at Netherhall he was much more than just the founder of the Association that runs the residence. The person who inspired many thousands of people all over the world to dedicate themselves freely to the service of God and their fellow men, and to set up educational centres like Netherhall in very many countries must have been a very warm-hearted personality with great human and spiritual qualities. It is not surprising that he was affectionately called "the Father" not only by members of Opus Dei but also by many others, including numerous non-Christians. The Solemn Requiem Mass which was celebrated in Westminster Cathedral on Saturday July 5th was attended by residents of all nationalities and religions from Netherhall. All of us wanted to express our gratitude. It was a moving occasion, also attended by a number of former residents.

As the news spread, Jim began to receive messages of condolence and sympathy from old friends and former residents all over the world. Tributes to Mgr. Escriva began to appear in the press of many countries. We are happy to reproduce one of these tributes, from Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, which was published in the *Corriere Della Sera*, November 9th 1975. Another person who knew him extremely well, because he worked alongside him for some forty years, is the Very Rev. Dr. Alvaro del Portillo, the new President General of Opus Dei. We are quite confident that Mgr. Escriva, from his new home in heaven, continues to have the same care for Netherhall — as for all the centres of Opus Dei — that he had during his life, and that he will guide and inspire us to achieve greater things, each one in his own personal life and in the life of society as a whole.

## The meaning of Opus Dei

by Cardinal Franz Koenig  
Archbishop of Vienna, Primate of Austria,  
President of the Secretariat for Non-Believers

Opus Dei has found and still finds itself the object of a series of conflicting judgements, and perhaps more so than any of the more recent spiritual movements in the Catholic Church. Much has been written about it and sometimes one can detect the writer's uneasiness as he is faced with a movement which cannot be categorised along traditional lines and which has mounted no publicity campaigns. It was only last summer, when the founder of Opus Dei, Mgr. Escriva de Balaguer y Albas, died, that the general public realised that the man who had given birth to a movement which spanned the globe, had still managed for decades to lead a silent and secluded life.

I knew Mgr. Escriva personally as a man of great spiritual authority. His associates had always admired his serenity, his disarming frankness and his organising talents. These qualities were combined with a warm understanding of the concern and the joys of others, and an ardent zeal for the things of God. On the last occasion we met, about eighteen months ago, we spoke about the Church's situation and the very decreasing membership of certain great religious families and spiritual movements.

Opus Dei, on the other hand, has been growing constantly, even in this age of confusion and uncertainty, to its present membership of sixty thousand. The members are drawn from the most diverse countries and social groups and from every imaginable profession — architects and journalists, factory workers and craftsmen. Among them there are those who live celibacy, but the majority are married and all strive to live a Christian life day by day.

Probably for many, the magnetic attraction of Opus Dei is due to its profoundly lay spirituality — in 1928, when he founded it, Mgr. Escriva was anticipating much of what, with Vatican II, has become part of the common heritage of the Church. Mgr. Escriva told those who followed him that the Christian's place was in the middle of the world. He was opposed to any false spirituality which amounted to a refutation of the central Christian belief in the Incarnation of God. The problem which fascinated Mgr. Escriva hinged around the question: how can a Christian, an ordinary Christian, who carries out some profession or job, who has a family and is a citizen like any other; how can this Christian achieve his personal vocation to sanctity without having to leave the world?

Mgr. Escriva did not want to create a new religious order, and one day he stated explicitly: "Nothing distinguishes the members of Opus Dei from their fellow citizens. On the other hand, apart from the faith they share, they have nothing in common with the members of religious orders. I love the religious, and I appreciate and admire their apostolates, their cloistered life, their separation from the world. But these are 'other' manifestations of holiness in the Church".

Mgr. Escriva wanted the members of Opus Dei to overcome the "double life" approach of many Christians — on one side their spiritual life, their conversations with God, the liturgy and charitable work: and on the other side, neatly cut off from the first, their family life, their professional and social activities, their life full of small earthly realities. Rejecting this separation, he used to say: "If we want to be Christians we cannot make this division which amounts to deforming our conscience. There is just one life, made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life that has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things".

The abiding interest and the work of Mgr. Escriva find expression in that "materialising" of the Christian life which had led him to speak of a "Christian materialism" which was courageously opposed to "Those materialisms which are blind to the spirit". He conceived of the Christian vocation as "transforming the prose of each day into heroic verse", and wanted all the little things of each day to be carried out with love, so that they might be filled with the majesty of God.

In this way he took up a theme which in terms of Christian piety had always recurred in the lives of great Christian men. It is clear that this appreciation of earthly things has its consequences in the way members of Opus Dei go about their work. They cannot be indifferent to public life but on the contrary must necessarily be actively concerned with what happens in the world. This interest has led those who criticise Opus Dei to imagine that they have found evidence of clericalism but nothing could be further from Mgr. Escriva's mind.

In a homily he gave in Spain, he said: "It would never occur to a Christian to think or say that he was stepping down from the temple onto the world to represent the Church, or that his solutions are 'the Catholic solutions' to problems. That would be inadmissible! That would be clericalism, 'Official Catholicism', or whatever you want to call it. In any case, it means doing violence to the very nature of things. You must foster everywhere a genuine 'lay outlook', which will lead to three conclusions: be sufficiently honest, so as to shoulder your own personal responsibilities; be sufficiently Christian, so as to respect those brothers in the faith who, in matters of free discussion, propose solutions different from your own: and be sufficiently catholic, to avoid involving our Mother the Church in human factions".

It was precisely because the Founder of Opus Dei had such a high regard for men's freedom and responsibility that his work has expressed itself with such expansive pluralism. In it we find people with the most diverse opinions in professional, political and economic matters, living unity within catholicity. Perhaps the growth of Opus Dei could be explained, from a purely human standpoint, by the attractive personality of Mgr. Escriva de Balaguer and by the built-in pluralism of the movement he founded. For the believer however, it is a sign of God's closeness and of that direct contact with Christ for which the founder of Opus Dei struggled all his life.

(CORRIERE DELLA SERA, Milan, Sunday Nov. 9th, 1975)

## Monsignor Escriva and Netherhall House

By Father Richard Stork

It was as early as 1950 that Mgr. Escriva was writing to the first members of Opus Dei in England, who were living in a flat in Kensington, telling them that he had plans for a large house in London which would be run as a residence for university students. These plans were made definite in the summer of 1951 and the search for suitable premises, and for people to help with the finances, began immediately.

Eventually a house was found at No. 18 Netherhall Gardens which had recently been set up as a private hotel and was practically ready for use as it was. The first students moved in on the Friday before Holy Week, 4th April 1952. I remember that it was a bitterly cold day as we took up residence. The first director was Michael Richards. He had obtained his LL.B. the previous year from London University, and was doing Chartered Accountancy. The chaplain was Fr. Joseph Navarro.

When the summer term started a few more residents joined us and we were about 15 residents in total. One remembers Dominic Swainson who studied music, Paul Kinichino Saito from Japan who was doing research in Mathematics and who is now a Professor in Tokyo, Michael Britto Mutunayagan from Ceylon (as it was then), and Ray McIntyre who studied electrical engineering and now lives in Berkeley, California.

Conditions were still primitive that first year. There was only a provisional oratory in what is now room 14 of the 'Old House' and there was no proper domestic help until June – when the work of adapting the Cottage and kitchen area was complete.

All the time, from the very start of Netherhall, and as the residence grew (No. 16 Netherhall Gardens was acquired in the summer of 1953), Mgr. Escriva encouraged us and sent people to help who had had experience in running other residences of Opus Dei in other countries – notably Colegio Mayor La Moncloa, in Madrid. Andrew Vazquez de Prada, known for his excellent taste and artistic appreciation, was responsible for much of the decoration and furniture. The budget was limited, but many of the items he acquired then are still with us, including the portrait of "Uncle Patrick" (as he was affectionately called) which now hangs in the entrance hall of the new building. Another person who had much to do with the beginnings of Netherhall was Fr. John Galarraga, who was then doing research at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He was the senior member of Opus Dei in England at that time and had the overall responsibility for the whole project, not the least of his "burdens" being that of finding the finances to set up and develop the residence.

From the very start Netherhall had an international flavour and the friendly atmosphere was always a great help to people from overseas who could feel at home and were encouraged to settle down to the difficult business of studying and taking exams.

When Mgr. Escriva first visited England in August 1958 he lost no time in calling in to see us at Netherhall House. He was pleased with what he saw and liked the family atmosphere in the House. Characteristically, however, he encouraged us to improve the material conditions of the residence and started us thinking about building an entirely new residence. This meant much work and planning – and he again obtained for us the experienced assistance we needed. For the next few years, up to and beyond the opening of the new buildings in 1966, many people worked extremely hard to make it a reality. Names that stand out include Giovanni Masia, from the RUI Foundation in Rome, Fr. Cormac Burke who came over from Washington, and Ramon Doderio the Mexican architect who designed the new buildings and was responsible for most of the interior decoration.

It was in the summer of 1958 that Mgr. Escriva wrote a letter from England to Michael Richards who was by then in Rome, studying for the priesthood. He told him how he dreamt of all the good work that would be done in and from this country, which he referred to as the "crossroads of the world". Netherhall House has in fact been, as many of those who have lived there know, the starting point for many other activities in different parts of the world. The universal spirit which helped create and develop Netherhall came directly

from Mgr. Escriva. He had a great love for souls for people of all nationalities and denominations and wanted to do as much as he could to help them achieve, by providing the conditions and environment necessary, the purpose for which God has destined them. He showed us that such a lofty ideal could be made accessible and become a reality through everyday, down-to-earth realities like hard work, friendship, loyalty, mutual help and understanding, and prayer.

R.A.P. Stork

Editorial Note: Father Richard Stork was one of the first residents to move in to Netherhall House on April 4th 1952, when it first opened. An engineer by profession, he was later director of Netherhall House (19 April 1961). He was ordained a priest in 1965.

## Why you should not take up Cross Country Running

By Lars Nilson

A couple of months ago I made a decision which I have since regreted – to go for an early morning run before work. If I had known at the time what problems this would have brought, I would never have started this contagious habit. Cross country running is as you might have guessed, addictive. Once the habit has reached a certain stage, you acquire the precision of a machine and a lot of willpower is needed to free yourself from its powerful clutches. To prevent any other person from falling victim to its caprice, I will present an account of my trials and sufferings.

The first difficulty you encounter is the problem of getting out of bed – at a time when most normal people are fast asleep. My eyes open, I take a deep breath and without knowing how, I soon find myself standing on the floor. Half the battle has

now been won, and dressing mechanically, I stagger to reception with my legs shivering with cold. I usually reach reception at six-thirty, and so have to wait a few minutes for the director to unlock the door (Jim Mirabal caught this habit in early January – a New Year's resolution – but broke the habit by January 18): For those short minutes I return to slumberland. The chairs in the reception are very conducive to sleep and by the time the director has arrived with his usual smiling face I feel very drowsy. Still, there is my reputation at stake and trying to look alert and athletic I proudly trot out into the cold morning air.

The race against time has begun, and the few people I pass give me sympathetic glances. An expression of pity seems to be written on their faces. This does not deter me and within minutes I reach Hampstead Heath, occasionally slipping on the wet grass. The course is semi-circular and finishes at the highest point of the Heath. By the time I have reached the top I feel exhausted. Nevertheless I have by now reached the final lap, the climax of my run.

The scenery at the top is panoramic - on one side you are confronted with the whole of north London and on the other side the Heath itself falls away beneath you. The sheer beauty of the scenery often fills me with delight and I have spent many minutes mesmerised by its splendour. It is then I suddenly remember I have to be back before 7.15, and looking at my watch I receive the shock of my life. My speed increases dramatically and it's only with great difficulty that I reach Netherhall on time. Staggering across to my bedroom, I grope for a towel, and finally bathe away my troubles under a nice hot shower.

Cross country running has managed to ensnare another victim. When will it loose its grip? Will I ever be able to lead a normal life again? Will there be a time when, like most people, I will be able to sleep normal hours? A word of advice therefore to potential cross country runners – avoid it like the plague!



2. 14 August 1975. A freak rainstorm caused a flood in the ground floor. Mopping up operations lasted well into the night!



3. NBC trip to Scotland: a) A stop on the way up.

## From the Cottage

By Steve McGibbon

Whenever we give news of Netherhall Boys Club there is always mention of improvements in the cottage itself. This year is no exception, the lounge and the kitchen have been given a facelift and the front door has been repainted once again. Much more important, however, has been the encouraging increase in the membership of the club. There is now a junior section which meets on Saturday morning, while the rest of the club operates on Saturday afternoon and evenings. The number of people taking a part in running the club has also grown. Apart from those like myself from Westpark, the Study Centre in Ealing, many Netherhall residents have been involved. Paul Standish, for example has been enthusing many members of the club who are now engaged in building a hovercraft, using an engine from a retired lawn mower. Another popular activity continues to be the building of the model railway. A lot of rolling stock and track has been obtained so the railway is really getting under way.

Needless to say, a regular activity is football which is played on the court behind the old house. And for those whose interests are not so physically exerting there is a stamp club.

Every week Phil Unsworth gives a class in Medical Science. On Saturday evenings there is a "Toast-masters" meeting — an activity aimed at increasing proficiency in the art of public speaking. Another activity, which has started up quite recently, is photography. The dark room has been restored to its former glory and every week the cottage resounds to the click of the camera and shouts of joy as the photographers produce yet another picture for the NBC album.

As well as these activities, the study room is always available for those who wish to do their homework or study for exams. Last year near examination-time some study days were organised which allowed for up to six hours study. Next year the study atmosphere will be maintained by organising how-to-study courses as well as holding more study days.

Events which stand out in the past year are the bazaar and the Christmas party. Many parents contributed to the success of the bazaar and we wish to thank them and everybody who helped. The Christmas party which was attended by over 30 people was a highlight in the club programme.

Over the past year there have also been several camps. Favourite spots for camping are Sudbury in Suffolk and the grounds of a school in Herefordshire. This summer there has been a major trip by minibus to Galicia in Spain.



b) Pitching tent.

## The Rome Trip 76

By Michael Booth

Every Easter since 1968 has seen a group of university students and sixth-formers set off on an expedition to Rome. Various people from Netherhall, both from the residence and the boys' club have gone in previous years. When I heard about the trip which was coming off this year I was determined that I should be on it.

In all, six people went from Netherhall. Santhia Pillay, Thomas Poh, Peter Lim and Neil Pickering all went by plane to fit in with their work schedules. Jim Mirabal and myself were able to join the overland party.

Some thirty people left London on Thursday 8th April in the three mini-buses, one from Manchester, one from Kelston in south London and the Netherhall Boy's club minibus NBC 1. The destination of the party was, of course the 'Eternal City', but we also took in such places as Paris, Grenoble, Sienna and Pisa en route. After spending a week in Rome we would return to London via Florence, Lake Como, Fribourg and Chateau de Couvrelles, near Rheims. The trip sounded exciting; I for one was to see more of Italy than I had ever done in my twenty-two years of living in the country.

The very places which we were able to visit would earn our expedition the title of a cultural trip. Paris was briefly seen in daylight but the Latin quarter was given our undivided attention in the evening. We marvelled at Italian motorway engineering as we entered along the Riviera. Pisa's individual Cathedral, bell tower and baptistery, a format which characterises many important churches, were each given a thorough inspection. The Netherhall bus, having mastered the complex Tuscan hills, was then able to deliver us the beauties of Sienna. The posse from NBC1 made its way through the delightful web of tightly knitted streets which led us to the circular Piazza Grande which has been the scene of so many traditional flag-throwing displays and horse racing events. Our next stop was Rome itself; nobody, with the possible exception of the Italian commuter can enter the Eternal City without being conscious of time. Buildings built before the birth of Christ are surrounded and contrasted by modern apartment blocks. Architectural anachronisms abound. Seven days and two inches of heel later we had managed to see the museums and parks as well as the beauty of the Roman Basilicas, the remaining splendour of the Colosseum and the majestic interior of the Pantheon.

Yet Rome is also the living heart of Catholic Christianity and we were there in Holy Week. We were joined by many other young people drawn to this city for the same reason. To attend an audience with the Pope and witness impressive ceremonies at this period left a deep interior impression, making the whole expedition particularly alive and much more than just another tourist trip.

All too soon Rome had been seen but it remained eternal in our memories as we made our way to Florence. This was to be a nocturnal visit and we were unable to visit the museums but we did manage to walk over the historic Ponte Vecchio

and we saw the replica of Michelangelo's 'Davide' statue in the Piazza Signorile. The bulk of the cultural side of our trip was now over and we enjoyed two days of rest on Lake Como north of Milan. The next stop was the university town of Fribourg in Switzerland. This was followed by a fantasmal night in an 18th Century castle on the outskirts of Soissons. Some younger members of our group found sleep difficult that night. Their imaginations filled with ghost stories were fed by the eerie appearance of the castle!

The next day saw the unenthusiastic return of Calais. Our minibus ran out of petrol which added a bit of excitement to the day. Nature determined to make this last day memorable by providing a spectacularly rough crossing leaving us feeling rather washed up at Dover.

Back in England our first concern was a visit to the uncultural but always welcome 'chippy' before finally arriving, exhausted, in London on the evening of Saturday 24th April.

The above account of the trip hardly begins to do justice to all that we saw and learnt. A brief mention should be made of another aspect of the Rome trip: thirty people living together for eighteen days. Each member of a minibus was part of a team which included drivers, cooks, tent-erectors, minibus cleaners and the all-essential map-readers. People soon learnt that the success of the trip depended on cooperation, on having a concern for others which is always a welcome thing and which inevitably produces a sense of general well-being. The final parting left a vacuum which was unpleasant, but we left each other in the knowledge that our joint adventure had taught us something worthwhile.

Roll-on Rome '77!



4. Rome Trip: unpacking the minibuses at Fribourg Switzerland.



5. Netherhall Conference June 1975  
The Mayor of Camden and his wife with John Branagan and Peter Adams.

## Netherhall House Conference

Following the success of the one-day conference in November 1974 (see Newsletter No. 5), another conference was held on June 1st 1975 on the subject of Policies and People. The guest speakers were Elizabeth Anscombe, Professor of Philosophy at Cambridge University, and Colin Clark, research fellow at Monash University (Melbourne) and formerly Director of the Agricultural Economics Research Institute at Oxford University. The Chairman was Bryan Cassidy. The audience of 120 included the Mayor and Mayoress of Camden, Mr and Mrs Taylor.

Professor Anscombe spoke on "The Source and Outer Limit of Civil Authority". From the questions that followed it was clear that many in the audience were not fully at home with her approach to the topic. There was no disagreement with the overall conclusion – that there is a need for authority in society and that it must clearly be limited – but in discussing its source one might have expected some reference to God and to the purpose of the finality of society. In fairness to Professor Anscombe, she did later express surprise that nobody had raised this very same question, which to her seemed the obvious one to ask. She evidently had plenty to say in that direction.



6. Jim with Dr. Clark and Professor Anscombe

In a lively and amusing talk, Dr. Clark showed the emptiness of the much publicised arguments of those who claim that the world is over-populated and fast running out of resources. Illustrating his lecture with numerous tables and graphs, he pointed out that the world's natural resources are practically inexhaustible, and he was convinced of the world's ability to feed its present and future populations. The problem of world hunger, he explained, is really one of distribution of wealth, and it is political obstacles more than anything else which cause millions to suffer from hunger. Good government, not birth control, is the answer. Dr. Clark agreed with the French demographer, Dr. Sauvy, that the degree of birth control



7. A view of the Patio between talks.

practised by some Western countries is a recipe for disaster - and that inflation is an inevitable consequence of birth control. As for the developing countries, Dr. Clark was quite convinced that they need an increase in population in order to reach higher levels of industrialisation. It was hardly surprising that someone should ask, in the discussion that followed, how it was that Dr. Clark

was like a voice "crying in the wilderness", Dr. Clark felt that for a great many people today life had lost any meaning and had little or no purpose and that their pessimistic views could perhaps be attributed to what he described "as a strong, half-conscious wish to bring our civilisation to an end". Whatever the reasons for the predominantly pessimistic views on population and resources – which are so actively canvassed by Western economists and governments – it will be clear to anyone who has heard Dr. Clark on the subject, that they are not based on a careful and scientific study of the facts.



8. Professor Anscombe speaking.

## Academic Achievements

Writing this article in Netherhall Newsletter is always slightly difficult. Not, one hastens to add, for lack of achievements. A bewildering variety of subjects are being studied by Netherhall residents. At most periods throughout the academic year someone is either taking examinations or getting results. We have attempted to make a complete list and of course apologise for any errors or omissions.

Worthy of special mention are Chris Johnson who gained the Final Year Prize in his Architectural School; and Cleland Arabio from Ghana whose radio documentary about Netherhall gained him a special award. Javier Castanon was a member of the team of architectural students whose design won a prize in an international competition in Vienna.

Credit is also due to some residents whose courses of training programmes did not include examinations. Naturally they do not appear on our list but we would like to record their successful stay here. They include Ingo Herklotz from Germany (History of Art); Paolo Giaquinta from Italy (Chemistry); Seraphim Kabura (Urban development) and Peter Kigira (Railways management) from Kenya; Minoru Umezu and Kenichi Kohno both from Japan and researching in politics; Sutee Na Songkhla (Thailand) and K.C. Lin from Taiwan both doing further medical research. To all of these go our congratulations and best wishes for future success.

### Cleland Ababio

Henry Adla  
Jean Abel  
Karyl Arthur  
Tariq Aziz  
Peter Bradley  
Javier Castanon  
Ashok Cheriyan  
Ray Davies  
James Carn  
Spiros Georgiles  
Amadeu Guimaraes  
Amin Jivraj  
Chris Johnson  
Robert Illes  
Terry Dau  
H.K. Lim  
Ovid Mascarenhas  
Hair Nair  
Mohamed Nanji  
Hunnis Phiri  
Thomas Poh  
Vincent Policella  
Roberto Reynolds  
Jeremy Ryan  
Katilah Shah  
Felix Ta  
Paul Graham

### Ghana

Kenya  
Mauritius  
Guyana  
Kenya  
UK  
Spain  
Kenya  
Sierra Leone  
UK  
Greece  
Portugal  
Uganda  
UK  
Hungary  
Hong Kong  
Malaysia  
Kenya  
Malaysia  
Kenya  
Malawi  
Malaysia  
UK  
Bolivia  
UK  
Kenya  
Vietnam  
UK

BBC Diploma in Radio programme production  
Diploma in Ophthalmology  
BA Humanities  
MSc Fluid Dynamics  
1st year exams in Accountancy  
1st year Royal College of Music  
Architectural Association Diploma  
Accountancy Part 1  
Accountancy Part 1  
BA Humanities Part 1  
MSc Economics  
1st Year Chemistry  
Accountancy Part 1  
Architecture Part 2  
BA Philosophy  
Medical Finals  
BA Accountancy (2nd Year)  
Accountancy Part 1  
Accountancy Finals  
Medical Technology Part 1  
MSc Nutrition Studies  
Accountancy Finals  
Accountancy Finals  
BA Spanish  
Dentistry Parts 4 & 5  
Accountancy Part 1  
BSc Engineering (2nd year)  
Distinction in Criminal Law