

21 February

Br VINCENT McARDLE 13 May 1925 – 21 February 2006



Vincent McArdle was born in Waterloo, near Liverpool, and worked for the British and American Tobacco Company before being called up to serve in the Royal Air Force during the war where he learnt wireless operating in India. He was one of the 28 scholastic novices who joined the Society in 1948 and he was part of the move to Harlaxton in Leicestershire. One of his contemporaries noted, ‘an engaging fussiness and gossipy involvement in everything’. When he moved to philosophy, he found the studies a strain and, after much probing, became a brother in 1955.

The same year saw him at St George’s from where he moved to become the archbishop’s assistant secretary in 1956. In 1964, he moved to St Ignatius as caterer and Frank Fitzsimmons, from whom he took over, remembers Vincent being bemused by the kippers (salted and brined herring) the students were served on Fridays and learning that his job involved counting them. He insisted on acquiring gloves for this exercise! In his abiding interest in flying he put up a notice informing the community which planes were flying overhead at what time, where they came from and where they were going. As secretary of the Mission Superior in the early seventies he was not shy to tell scholastics to make sure they took the cheapest possible airfare, i.e. the red-eye flight, and at the same time load them down with mail to be posted in South Africa during the UDI times of sanctions.

On the day the dead of two world wars were remembered, he would wear his war medals, his ‘gongs’ as he called them, but one was missing. It had never reached him. A member of the community suggested he approach the Queen Mother. Sure enough, it was hand-delivered, coincidentally, at the time of Zimbabwe Independence.

He later returned to St George’s where Frank enjoyed his friendship and his ways. Vincent would cut the community’s hair at appointed times on Saturday as long as it did not interfere with his morning tea.

On returning to England in 1985 he went to Preston where David Birchell found him a ‘delightful extrovert, happy to be with people and, as a ‘Scouser’ (native of Liverpool) he was ever ready to do a comic turn’. There was something of the eternal schoolboy in him and he delighted in telling everyone he drove Cardinal Montini (later Paul VI) round Zimbabwe. The parish in Preston used to give him £20 at Christmas which, as a good Jesuit, he handed in to the superior but ‘to his chagrin, the superior accepted it.’