

22 February

Fr ANTHONY WILLIAMS 10 March 1899 – 22 February 1975



Tony Williams was born in London, educated at Wimbledon Jesuit College and entered the Society in 1916. His last year of the novitiate was interrupted by war service and he came back from the war to take his vows. In 1933 we find him teaching in Sri Lanka and then he became head of the Jesuit School in Sunderland in the north of England. Now, it was the Second World War and the school struggled to meet ministry standards and qualify for support.

But Tony was an optimist and created a friendly atmosphere in the school without much emphasis on discipline. Someone who heard him preach observed, ‘He makes it sound very difficult to escape going to heaven.’

In 1943, he was in St Aidan’s and Fr Waterhouse noted ‘his anger about how blacks were treated’. This does not quite fit with Henry Townsend’s observation that he was hardly troubled by the iniquity of the social set up in South Africa. He lived entirely among whites and did not meet black people but he was without any racial prejudice and was annoyed when parents and old boys tried to block his acceptance of a Chinese boy into the school.

He was a ‘presence’ around the school when Mike Lewis was a school boy and taught him latin rather badly. He was an indefatigable recruiter of school boys. He visit Mike Lewis parents home while giving a parish retreat and seeing the three year old Michael playing on the floor asked where he would go to school and immediately suggested St Aidan’s College, so nine years later Mike when to school at St Aidan’s in spite of the fact that his parents had little knowledge of Jesuits or their education.

Richard Copeland observed ‘his great innocence of heart and boyish zest for life.’ As rector, Tony built the ‘New Wing’ and bought ‘the New Field’. He taught English and Latin, coached cricket and ran plays. He got on with everyone and was ‘incurably noisy’. In 1965 his health began to fail and he was given a lighter job at Mater Dei hospital where he was alternatively chaplain and patient depending how he felt. It was thought he would only live for six months but he lasted for nine years.

He was buried at Izeli cemetery, a large Dominican sisters cemetery, just outside of Kingwilliams Town, the only Jesuit for miles around.