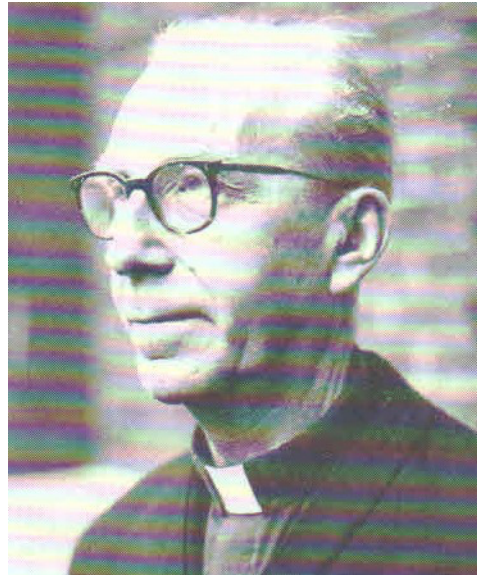


May 2

Fr RICHARD COPELAND

12 April 1914 – 2 May 1982

Born in India into a ‘typically imperial family’ where his father was a Conservator of Forests, Richard Copeland or Dick followed his two elder brothers to Stonyhurst. One of them, Frank, told how the other, William, died when he was ten and David Hoy in his homily at Dick’s funeral mentioned what he’d heard from Frank; ‘William used to give away his jam.’ This was quite a sacrifice in war-time and Fr Hoy thought this generosity ran in the family.



Richard Copeland entered the Society in 1931 and was ordained in 1945. From 1945 to '53 he was at Beaumont and in 1954, sailed to South Africa where he taught at St Aidan’s. He taught David Dryden Latin when David arrived in the school and, though he was a year behind the other boys, he soon caught up so ‘I suppose he was good teacher’. ‘He was very tall and upright’, David remembers, ‘and gave us the impression he was very “upper class” and aloof but he welcomed us to his room in the evenings and taught us how to mark the missal for Mass.’

He was at the Cathedral in Salisbury in 1958 but then was recalled to St Aidan’s to become rector the following year. Hoy had little to report of his years as rector beyond mentioning he ran into a black cow in the dark which, somehow, did not show up in the headlights. Other sources tell us he built the new science wing though Gregory Croft did most of the design and layout. David Dryden describes the new labs: ‘The entrance had one wall covered in blue tiles with printed outlines of creatures in the evolutionary history of life from the simplest to the more complex, ending with man launching into space. There was a quote proclaiming God as the Creator of all. It was very impressive.’

Hoy says they were happy years for him but this passes over some difficult moments. Seemingly, he did not see eye to eye with old Aidanites who were trying to support the school. Copeland lacked knowledge of finance but was unwilling to take advice. He was liked and admired by the boys though Mark Hackett felt he liked to associate with representatives of schools which catered for what could be identified as the local aristocracy. David says he was just trying

to put St Aidan's on the map. He made contacts with top boarding schools but St Aidan's was just not in that league, in size or in wealth. So his efforts were seen as 'snobbish.' Then when Fr General's visitor, David continues, 'arrived in 1964 with an explicit mission to get the English Jesuits to close some of their schools, St Aidan's was one of the targets. Dick's obedience to the General was diametrically opposed to the loyalty and affection of the staff and old boys for the school. Many of the Jesuits had been there a long time and felt remote from the Mission Superior in Salisbury whom they only saw once a year. An agreement was reached that there would be seven Jesuits there for the next ten years but this was broken when Goller left to head the CLG in Johannesburg and Higham went on leave and never came back. Dick must have been very scarred by his experience.'

On returning to England, he did a sabbatical in the States just after the Council which gave him a deep interest in the retreat movement then undergoing a huge renewal. In pursuit of this new mission he was superior successively of Corby Hall Retreat House, Stamford Hill, Farm St and Southwell House which he wanted to make a place for diocesan priests to make retreats and also a place where they could relax. This plan never got off the ground.

He was invited to Australia to give retreats in 1982 but died shortly after arriving. David Dryden thinks his death may have been connected to his being a diabetic and forgetting his daily insulin injection.