

18 August

Br EDWARD TOON

25 January 1901 – 18 August 1979



We do not have ‘manuductors’ in the Society today and the word is immediately underlined in red on a laptop but it was a time-honoured position in the Society. He was the one who ran the practical side of the house while the minister was a bit at one stage removed. Br Toon was almost a lifelong manuductor in formation houses which means he was a formator in his own right. The words ‘precise’ and ‘perfectionist’ are often repeated in the account of his life.

He was born in Walsall in England and worked on the railways for a while before joining the Society in 1922. Briefly at Empandeni, he was at St George’s in Bulawayo at the time of its move to Salisbury. In 1928 he was showing signs of chest pains and TB was diagnosed. After a short time at Campion House he was sent back to England to recover. But there was a problem. He had burnt his passport, never expecting he would need it again once he was out here in Africa! He settled down as manuductor at the novitiate and he had a special duty towards brother novices. Atco (Br Atkinson) remembers being told by Br Toon, ‘Do it thoroughly, brother’.

Br Toon – somewhere along the line he acquired the name Tessie – was steeped in the *Imitation of Christ* – ‘he could quote it by heart’ - and the works of Père de Caussade and Père Grou. The present writer once visited him in his room and he kept these and other precious books in his top drawer – not on a book shelf. Not jovial by nature he was deep down a happy man. He tried to unite himself with the thinking of the Society and the Church. When Atco was feeling down, he was told by Tessie, ‘Well, my dear, just think of the Pope and Fr General and the burden they carry’. The minister, on one occasion, had the bright idea of buying marmalade in bulk and storing it in china containers. Br Toon had the job of storing them and special shelves were installed for this purpose. But that very night the shelves gave way under the weight of the marmalade and their vessels and Tessie had the surprise of opening the door next day on the sight of broken china in a sea of marmalade.

His relaxation was to go out somewhere ‘posh’ for tea. That meant proper delicate china cups, strawberries and cream. This writer was once taken out

from Harlaxton to Lincoln by Br Toon for this purpose. We first toured the cathedral and saw the carving of wicked elves representing the evil spirits and then we went for tea.

Br Toon had a break from being manuductor at the old Heythrop. He was infirmarian and acquired a cat he was fond of but another cat kept harassing it. Br Toon asked 'Poop', Fr de Trafford, to shoot the offending cat. Br Toon led him out and pointed out the cat in a tree. It was a good shot and the cat fell to the ground but, alas, it was the wrong cat. It was Br Toon's cat.

Fr Frank Kelly remembers, when he was a tertian and sweeping a corridor, and, with great respect for the priesthood, Br Toon whispering in his ear, 'I think we could do a little better, Father, if we tried'.

Atco summed him up: 'He was a great Brother: he demanded much from the novices he trained. I for one feel I could not have done the things I have done in the Society without his training and example.'