

16 October

Fr ROBERT CARTY 28 February 1917 – 16 October 2016



We hear of great headmasters, like Arnold of Rugby, who turned around their schools and made them more in tune with the times. But we are unlikely to have heard of one who did it in three schools! Robert Carty did not quite make 100 but he was a Jesuit for 82 years. He came from Cambuslang, Lanarkshire, Scotland, studied at St Aloysius, Glasgow and joined the Society in 1934. He studied Chemistry at Campion Hall, Oxford and was ordained in 1949.

His first school was the Jesuit college in Preston where he arrived in 1952. He put his stamp on the curriculum and general order and discipline in the school. One who was there in his time remembers how he could reduce 600 boys to silence in an instant when he came into the assembly! He knew each boy and often something of their background. But he was also relaxed and confident and enjoyed it when they made fun of him as on an outing when, noting his bald head, they chanted, 'Who's got a head like a ping pong ball?'

Next came St George's where he arrived in 1962 and became prefect of studies and later headmaster. He introduced Open Days for parents where they could wander round the school and ask questions, staff meetings for the whole staff, including cleaners and he took the first step to make the school multi-racial. There was never a dull moment in his time, wrote Terence McCarthy in the Centenary book, *Men for Others*, (1996). Roland von Nidda recalls being asked by Carty what he was going to do when he left school. 'Become a Jesuit,' said Roland. Robert giggled as much to say, 'You?' Robert found time at St George's to also teach at St Ignatius where they were searching with some anxiety for a chemistry teacher.

His third school was Wimbledon which he changed from being a Grammar school to Comprehensive. When he first arrived general order in the place was easy going. Carty spent days 'drifting around the school in a Jesuit gown and a trilby hat saying nothing and observing everything.' He may have been small in stature but he was big in personality. Again, one who was there at the time wrote of Carty building a 'sense of community in the school ... Most of all we could be ourselves.

Later Robert became Mission Superior in South Africa. Not everyone was happy as, for instance, he bought Murray House seemingly against advice and 'Carty's Castle' was not a success. But Stephen Buckland remembers that the stern school master had by then morphed into a genial host. On returning to England in 1989, he became delegate for the aged (He was by then one himself) and Alan Harrison noted his 'patience, wisdom, serenity and humour.'