
Waterford Kamhlaba UWCSEA

The Early History

By Mike Linden





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St. Peter's

Where and when did it all begin?

The answer is surprisingly precise. On 10 October 1954, the London daily newspaper *The Observer* published an article by an Anglican priest and monk working in Johannesburg, Fr Trevor Huddleston CR. Entitled 'The Church Sleeps On', it was a damning indictment of the failure of white South African Christians to oppose or even to recognise the intrinsic evil of apartheid, and a passionate call to Christians to act. It sprang from Huddleston's experience of the suffering, the frustration, the deprivation – physical, educational, social, political – of his black parishioners. Most immediately, it sprang from his anger and sorrow at the restrictions just imposed on his close friend, Oliver Tambo. "As I write," he says, "I have just had the news that one of my African friends, a devout Christian, has been banned and his movements proscribed for two years. This kind of procedure has now been taken against virtually all African and Non-European leaders of any standing in South Africa, including a great many trade unionists. Yet, White South Africa remains silent, either approving wholeheartedly such totalitarian methods or tacitly accepting them as part of a pattern of life which has become familiar."

Michael Stern, then the 32-year-old Deputy Head of Langham Oaks Approved School in Essex, read the article and, characteristically, acted immediately. That same day he wrote to Huddleston, asking what he could do to help.

To those who knew him, there can be no doubt that Michael Stern's values, ideals and actions arose from a devout (if not always completely conventional) Christian faith. So it is not at all surprising that Trevor Huddleston's agonised appeal to Christians moved him so immediately,

and so deeply. His family background of missionary work, the influence of his stepfather's passion for social justice, his wartime experiences, his liberal (in the best sense) education and his own natural instincts moved him to a deeply Christian anger at what was being done in the name of Christianity in South Africa, and to a deep compassion for the innocent who suffered as a result. From that anger and that compassion, from that intense commitment to justice, Waterford Kamhlaba was eventually born.

Michael Alexander Stern (1922 -2002)

This history of Waterford Kamhlaba cannot tell the full story of Michael Stern – his life and achievements deserve nothing less than a full and fully reflective biography. Yet his impact and lasting influence on the school he founded have been such that an understanding of his character, his background, his ideals and his values is essential to an understanding of why Waterford Kamhlaba is what it is. To begin with, then, here is a brief account of Michael's life until his arrival in South Africa in 1955, for which I am very largely indebted to his brother, Peter.

Michael Stern was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on 13 January 1922, the second son of Theo and Elizabeth (née Campbell) Stern. Of German origin, the Stern family had become thoroughly anglicised through Theo's father's long years of work as a missionary in India under the auspices of the London Missionary Society. Theo Stern was one of several British engineers employed in the Egyptian Irrigation Department. Before the First World War he gained an Engineering Degree at Birmingham University. He served in the Royal Engineers, British Army throughout that War, starting with the Gallipoli campaign and later in Europe where he was awarded the Military Cross, and ended his service as a Major. He married Elizabeth Campbell in 1917. His first civilian employment was with the Midland Railway, but when the Egyptian Government advertised appointments in England for engineers in Egypt he applied. He was accepted in 1919 and he and Elizabeth moved to Alexandria.

Life for expatriates in Egypt in the 1920s was comfortable at first, but after a few years the Egyptian people were beginning to resent the large expatriate community in their country, and this led to tensions. In 1926, demonstrations and riots broke out in the streets of Alexandria, and the Sterns decided to leave Egypt and seek employment in Iraq, which was then under a British mandatory administration that welcomed British engineers with irrigation experience. In the autumn of 1927, when Michael was five years old and his brother Peter was seven, the family moved to Baghdad. There were no schools for British children in Baghdad, and, in 1928, the boys were taken to England and left with their grandparents, Dr and Mrs Harry Campbell, and two maiden aunts in Dartmouth, South Devon, to start their education.

In 1930, when Michael was eight years old, he joined his brother at Ravenswood Preparatory School in North Devon, not far from Tiverton. A year later, before the end of the Easter term in 1931, the boys were suddenly taken from school to Dartmouth to be told that their father Theo had been murdered in Iraq, by an Iraqi with a grievance. Michael had last seen his father in 1928 when he was on leave from Iraq.

Michael enjoyed telling the story of how, not long after this, he had run away from his preparatory school because of what seemed to him unfair treatment, revealing, at an early stage, the independence, determination and deep sense of justice that characterised all his actions throughout his life. He was, however, kindly received when he was taken back to the school and seems to have been happy enough for the rest of his time there.



In 1934, his mother Elizabeth married a cousin of Theo's, Lt. Colonel Roland Hamilton, Royal Engineers, and joined him in India for a year before his retirement from the Army. On retiring Roland bought land at Lynchmere, Haslemere, and designed and supervised the construction of Maryfield, which became home for Michael and his brother. Roland was a most unusual Indian Army officer, progressive and very willing to step outside the traditions of his class and caste, and became active in various aspects of social and educational development upon retirement. On the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, he was recalled into the Army, and the family did not return to Lynchmere until 1945.

From 1945 to 1950 Roland was Labour MP for Sudbury, Suffolk – his election a tribute to his personal qualities in what was traditionally one of the most conservative and Conservative constituencies in England. Michael was very fond of his step-father, and had a deep respect for his sincerity and his selfless service to others, both of which, together with his political views, had a considerable influence on Michael's own ideas and values. It was a severe shock when Roland died unexpectedly in 1953 at the age of 66.

In 1935 Michael followed his brother to Gresham's School in Holt, Norfolk. Gresham's in those days was an unusual boys' public school. There was no beating, there were no matches with other public schools in order to avoid over-emphasis on sport, and there was an 'honour system' under which boys had to pledge to follow three rules: to speak the truth always, not to smoke and not to drink alcohol. This system, which had been introduced at the beginning of the 20th century by the then headmaster, was beginning to wear a bit thin but the happy and relaxed atmosphere and good relations between boys and staff was still a big bonus in the school and Michael clearly retained affectionate memories of his time there, memories which influenced his own approach to relationships when he became a teacher.

Michael left Gresham's in 1940, moving on to Downing College, Cambridge for a year, studying for the English Tripos. In 1941 he was commissioned in the British Army Royal Signals, and saw service in Combined Operations in North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Greece. Michael was demobilised as Captain and Adjutant in 1946, and returned to Downing College, Cambridge for another year, taking the History Tripos Part 2, with a BA, followed by an MA in 1950.

On leaving university he chose teaching as his profession, and his first appointment was Assistant Master in English and French at Worksop College, a boys' public school in Nottinghamshire. The school belonged to the Woodard Foundation, with a fairly strict Church of England tradition. Michael found the atmosphere of the school rather oppressive and left after three years to join Bedales School as Senior English Master and Assistant Housemaster. While he enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and easy discipline at Bedales, he left in 1952 after two years, feeling a calling away from the privileged children of well-to-do parents, to devote his attention to boys on the far margins of society. Nevertheless, the Bedales experience had a lasting impact: the school was founded in 1893 "as a liberal alternative to the rigid and authoritarian regimes prevalent in independent schools of the time".¹ The school's current website states that "self-discipline, achieved through discussion and persuasion, is preferred to the imposition of arbitrary conformity", and a former Headmaster, Euan Macalpine, spoke of the liberal tradition of the school being not just a question of fewer rules but as "a liberalism of option, of choice, of discussion, of argument".² These were attitudes and values Michael took from Bedales (to which he returned later in his life and where he sent his own children) and adapted to differing circumstances in South Africa and at Waterford. It was at Bedales, too, that Michael first met Fr Trevor Huddleston CR who visited the school and who was later to have such a profound influence on his career.

For the next three years Michael Stern held two appointments with Home Office Approved Schools for boys. The first was as principal teacher at the well-known Cotswold School, Wiltshire, and the second as Deputy Headmaster at Langham Oaks School, Essex.³ The Headmaster at the Cotswold School, CA Joyce, bought a radically child-centred approach to his treatment of these often seriously abused boys and, although the student body could not have been much more different from that of Bedales, the two institutions were very much alike in their emphasis on developing the particular strengths and talents of each child and placing much less emphasis on the requirements of the institution. As Joyce put it, his interest lay in the criminal, not the crime. Like Bedales, the Approved Schools certainly had a distinctive influence on the development of Michael's educational philosophy but, as far as Waterford is concerned, two colleagues he met and became close friends with at the Cotswold School were even more important: Gordon Milne and Tony Hatton became founder members of the Waterford staff and their influence on the school's development was to be profound.

It was while he was Deputy Head at Langham Oaks that, in October 1954, Michael Stern read an article by Father Trevor Huddleston CR, published in the London newspaper, "The Observer". [\[Click here to read the Observer article which sparked Michael Stern to act: "The Church Sleeps On"\]](#)

When Father Huddleston received Michael Stern's letter he too, equally characteristically, replied immediately. St Peter's, the historic school for black boys in Rosettenville, Johannesburg, needed a headmaster. The Community of the Resurrection, of which Huddleston was then the Provincial Superior, had decided, early in 1954, to close the school because the provisions of the Bantu Education Act which would thenceforward govern its syllabus and management were antithetical to their Christian principles. But Huddleston felt a deep sense of obligation to the remaining students and to the traditions of the school, and was determined to ensure that standards and results remained high. So, on October 16, 1954, Huddleston wrote:

Your letter of Oct 11th reached me an hour or two ago and I am answering at once and briefly because I believe it is a direct answer to prayer. We need you very much indeed and just as soon as you can come. Owing to recent developments (which I wrote about in the Observer), we are planning to close this school (a secondary school for Africans – up to Matric standard) in Dec. 1956. It is more than probable that our present headmaster will leave in December this year. Even if he doesn't we are short-staffed but I think he almost certainly will. I will, write, of course, and give you greater details, but I want to say at once that if you could come here for two years (as Head, or House M.), I believe that you would be doing a tremendous service in these critical days. I really am asking you to make an act of faith, resign your present job and get

here as soon as you can! I am sure you are the man for us.⁴

Michael had mentioned two schools in the then Rhodesia, spurring Huddleston to add a postscript that reinforced the urgency of his feelings:

I know Snell and Peterhouse and will write at length about both. But please come here!⁵

It did not take long for Michael to make his decision, for on 15 November Huddleston was able to write:

I received your cable of acceptance on Sunday – the day I left Johannesburg for Basutoland and I shall be away for a week: hence my delay in acknowledging it. I do want you to know how deeply grateful we are to you for this most generous and bold decision. Coming just now when the future is so uncertain it has helped very greatly to stiffen the morale of the school and indeed of us all. I hope and pray you will not regret it and will be happy with us. No doubt you will be writing to tell us when you can arrive.....Needless to say, we are very greatly looking forward to having you with us. This is just to thank you again for accepting.⁶

In March 1955 Michael Stern arrived at Jan Smuts Airport in Johannesburg and immediately took up his post as Headmaster of St Peter's. Luise Joubert, in her history of St. Martin's School, founded by Michael in 1958 writes:

With his arrival he made history for two schools, in that he came to be the undertaker of the one and midwife to the other.⁷

We of Waterford would want to make that three schools, because of course Michael became, as a direct result of his move to South Africa, the founder, father and continuing inspiration of the third.

St Peter's School, Rosettenville

Oliver Tambo wrote of his arrival at St Peter's: "I was now at an institution which was representative of the whole country, of the whole of South Africa – a school which had most of the attributes of a national, as distinct from a local institution. I had entered a wider world."⁸

Tambo's biographer, Luli Callinicos, comments that "St Peter's was indeed a wider, and a very different world."⁹ The members of the monastic Community of the Resurrection which founded and supervised the school came largely from backgrounds of middle-class privilege, but its mission was to the working-class poor, both in Britain and elsewhere. To quote Callinicos again: "This consideration of the working-class people together with a broader, more intellectual and flexible view of the message of the Bible than was generally accepted at the time, marked members of the CR as socially radical."¹⁰ No more than a slight tinge of radicalism was required to attract suspicion in a country where conformity to the accepted racial attitudes of the white population, both Afrikaans- and English-speaking, was the highest norm. The Community of the Resurrection soon, therefore came into conflict with white society, including many adherents of their own Anglican faith.

In 1909, at the suggestion of Lady Selborne, wife of the High Commissioner, a training centre for black female domestic workers was established under the auspices of the Anglican Diocese. In order to begin this venture, the Community of the Resurrection acquired twenty acres in Rosettenville, then a small, scattered suburb, a considerable distance from the centre of Johannesburg. In 1910, the Community decided to build a Priory and a Theological College to train black students for the Anglican ministry, both to be called St Peter's, on the site. In the following year, the Community moved from the site in Sherwell St in Doornfontein, which they had occupied since 1903. They moved not only themselves and their furniture but also the wood and corrugated-iron buildings they lived in, to be re-erected in Rosettenville. Building of the Theological College and the Priory was slow because of a shortage of funds, but by 1915 the College was operational.

Few of the students arriving at St Peter's College had more than a few years of formal education, and even fewer had any experience of secondary education. This naturally imposed a great strain on their education in Theology, especially as, for most of them, a lack of proficiency in English was a major difficulty. Fr Alban Winter CR suggested that the answer lay in expanding the small day school for African boys, which had already existed on the site when the Community arrived, as an entity quite separate from the Theological College, to educate boys who would progress eventually into the College. He was appointed to initiate the scheme and was soon able to report: "Thus it was in January 1922 we took over the small

day school of St Peter on our mission property at Rosettenville with the intention of building it up into a Secondary School."¹¹ Fr Winter became the first Headmaster, a position that he held until 1934.

It was soon obvious that the demand for education was such that the policy of restricting the intake to future candidates for ordination to the priesthood could not be maintained. Girls were first admitted in 1925, living in the old St Agnes building, but there were never many and they do not seem ever to have been a real influence – the impressive list of St Peter's graduates who have made their mark nationally and internationally is entirely male. Matric was introduced in 1932 and the first matriculant went on to Fort Hare University in 1933. By then St Peter's had established an unparalleled reputation for academic excellence, while promoting the cultural, literary, musical and artistic development of its pupils. Predictably, although inaccurately – its pupils were emphatically not the sons of a wealthy and privileged elite – St Peter's came to be known as "the Black Eton".

Political development was not one of the school's overt goals but it was an inevitable consequence of the ethos of the staff and the Community and the mixture of intelligent, articulate and questioning students who were admitted from all over the country. Es'kia Mphahlele, doyen of black South African writers, wrote interestingly of a growing awareness of his own and others' attitudes towards race, making it clear just how astonishingly different St Peter's was from most of the rest of South Africa: "For the first time in my life, when I was at St Peter's, an awareness was creeping into me: an awareness of the white man's ways and aims. There was complete harmony between us and the white teachers at the school and between them and the African staff. And yet no one, Brother Roger or the Principal or the Community fathers, ever said anything about the attitude they thought we should adopt towards the whites and white authority outside the school. Slowly I realised how I hated the white man outside the walls of St Peter's."¹²

Besides Prof Mphahlele, St Peter's educated such renowned South Africans as Duma Nokwe, Arthur Maimane, Zeph Mothopeng, Fikile Bam, Hugh Masekela, Jonas Gwangwa and Zakes Mokaie. And, of course, most illustrious of all, OR Tambo. Tambo matriculated from St Peter's in 1938 with a first class pass and a distinction in Mathematics. After obtaining his BSc, but before he had completed his Teaching Diploma, Tambo was expelled from the University of Fort Hare for leading a protest action on what he later described to Father Huddleston as "a small matter ... but certain principles were involved ..."¹³

Finding it impossible to get a job with the expulsion on his record, Tambo was both relieved and delighted when St Peter's offered him a post as a teacher of Science and Higher Mathematics, beginning in 1943. He remained at the school for five years, a popular, respected, innovative and very successful teacher, until he qualified as a lawyer and went on to join Nelson Mandela in what was to become a partnership which went far beyond the limits of legal practice. It was in his first year of teaching at St Peter's that Tambo met Trevor Huddleston, newly arrived in the country. So different in background, the two shared a deep religious conviction, a passionate commitment to social justice and deep anger at the deprivation, abuse and humiliation which were the daily lot of black South Africans.

Despite, or partly, perhaps, because of, its success, St Peter's was not destined to survive. By the mid-1940s, Rosettenville

had become, apart from the Priory, the Theological College and the School, an exclusively white suburb and St Peter's, originally isolated in an expanse of bare veld, was surrounded by white homes. In 1947, 2 500 residents petitioned the City Council for the removal of the complex but government assured the Community that their occupation of the site was secure provided it continued to be used for religious and educational purposes.

However, with the election of a Nationalist government in 1948, came a series of laws which were to destroy St Peter's School. First came the Group Areas Act of 1950, which made it impossible for blacks to live, other than as servants, in areas declared reserved for white occupation. More deadly, though was the Bantu Education Act of 1951, which gave the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Verwoerd, sweeping powers to bring education for black South Africans under the centralised control of his Ministry, to adapt syllabuses to the 'black way of life' and gradually, by the reduction of subsidies, to take the management of black schools away from the Churches which had founded and still ran most of them.

"The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour."¹⁴

In a pamphlet entitled 'Death of a School', published in 1954, when the full implications of the Act had become indisputably clear, Fr Huddleston (who was then the Provincial Superior of the Community of the Resurrection and Superintendent of St Peter's) summarised the aims and inevitable consequences of the Act. He concluded:

In other words the BEA is so framed as to bring death and destruction to all mission schools. It is 'part of a wider scheme of social development ...' namely total apartheid. And in this scheme there is no room for those who believe education to be the opening of the door to the widest culture attainable. There is no room for those ideals which – however inadequately – the mission schools have stood for throughout the years. There is only one path open to the African – it is the path back to tribal culture and tradition: to ethnic groups: to the reserves: to anywhere other than the privileged place inhabited by the master race. It is because we cannot accept such principles that we are closing St Peter's School Rosettenville.

It has been a decision made in anguish and only after the most careful thought and prayer. For it means the end of forty years of labour and devotion, and it means the break-up of a tradition of which we are unashamedly proud ... We have made it because we are entirely convinced that the policy enshrined in the BEA is contrary to all Christian principles in that it desires to prevent the full and free development of human personality. Any educational plan based on the conception that one race is and must always remain inferior to another is abhorrent to us. We would sooner die with honour than exist with so heavy a burden on our conscience ...

The day will of course come when, once more, the spirit and ideals of St Peter's will come into their own ... We can only hope and pray that for the sake of South Africa and of the generations of Africans yet unborn it may not be too long delayed.¹⁵

As an expression of the rationale for the founding of Waterford Kamhlaba ten years later, these words of Huddleston's could hardly be bettered.

Michael threw himself into the work at St Peter's with characteristic vigour, not hesitating to make changes that he thought would bring improvements, even at this late stage. He introduced a student school committee and gave them a degree of responsibility, and did all he could to energise a teaching staff understandably demoralised by the school's imminent closure. A St Peter's student (later the father of a Waterford student) tells how the new Headmaster would visit the dormitories before lights out and demonstrate to the boys the correct way of doing press-ups – keeping still was never an easy option for him.

A few months after his arrival, he ended a letter to his family:

To sum up, life here is intensely busy but as intensely interesting and I would not for the world have missed this opportunity to take part in one of the world's most vital and distressing problems.¹⁶

He was soon involved in other activities as well: within a few months of his arrival, he joined the Liberal Party, then the only non-racial political party in the country. (In 1968, however, the apartheid government passed the 'Prevention of Improper Interference Act', which banned parties from having multiracial membership, and the Liberal Party chose to disband.)

Naturally, I have joined," he wrote home. "I knew I would not be able to keep my political neutrality for very long.¹⁷

His family must have recognised the "political neutrality" as heavily tongue in cheek. He had, after all, come to South Africa because of the excesses of a political system which he (and, increasingly, much of the rest of the world) saw as simply evil. There was never, as he would so often demonstrate, any hesitation about Michael's attitude to apartheid or any other form of injustice: it had to be actively opposed.

The departure of Fr Huddleston in 1956, less than a year after Michael's arrival, must have been a severe blow to the new Headmaster, as it was to St Peter's, to thousands of black South Africans and, indeed, to Huddleston himself. He had become one of the focal points of resistance to the swelling excesses of the Nationalist government, particularly to Bantu Education and forced removals. In recognition of his efforts he was awarded the African National Congress's highest honour, "Isitwalandwe", at the Congress of the People in Kliptown in 1955. He was not only a thorn in the flesh of the government, though; he was regarded as an embarrassment by many in his own Church, including some in positions of high authority.

Trevor Huddleston CR

Only a truly monumental biography could do justice to the life, achievements, influence and spirituality of one of the greatest of modern churchmen. Here I can give no more than a sparse outline and some reflections on his personality and his influence in bringing Waterford into being.

Trevor Huddleston was born in London in 1913, the son of an officer in the colonial Indian navy. Like so many other children of the Raj, he saw very little of his father in his early childhood – in fact, he did not see him at all until he was seven. At seven, he was sent to boarding school – first to a prep school and then the public school, Lancing. He spoke of his schooldays as a very happy time although, he says, he in no way distinguished himself. One experience, though, is clearly remembered:

“During those years the school had what was called a 'mission' down in Camberwell, which in those days was one of the very poorest slum areas in London. I used to go there with one or two friends, as we were invited to do, to stay down there and see how the other half lived you might say. It certainly had an impact on me because the kids were barefoot and obviously lots of them had rickets and were malnourished. So it was quite an eye-opener for somebody who had

been brought up in Hampstead, and it certainly did something to turn my mind to the social divide”¹⁸

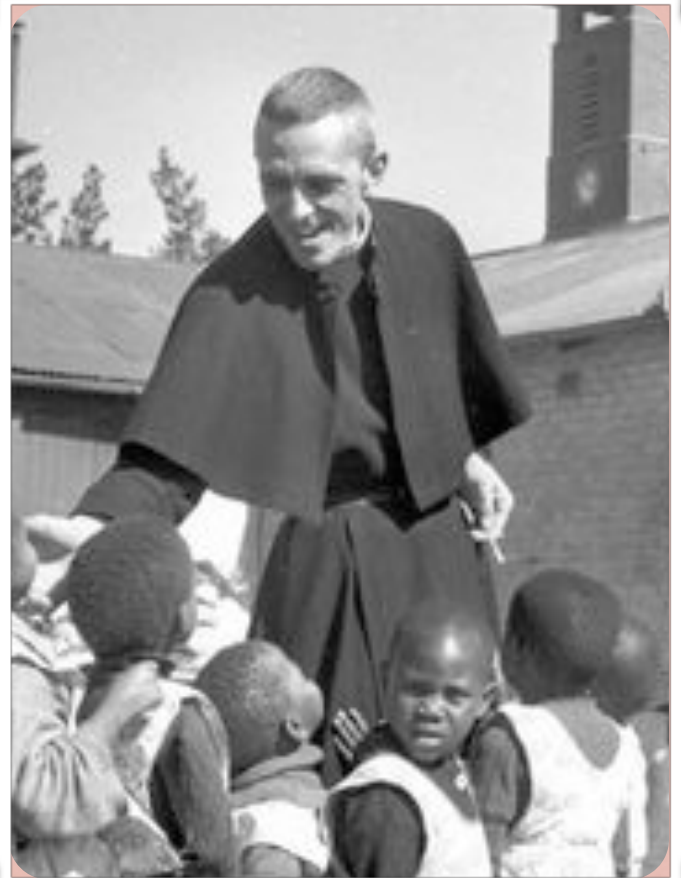
A slightly later experience was to have an even greater impact:

“It wasn't really until I got to Oxford in 1931 that I became politicised. I was at Oxford from 1931 to 1934 at Christ Church, which is a fairly wealthy College – not that I had all that much money. It was by that time clear that I ought to be ordained into the ministry of the church and it was the time when unemployment was enormously high. The hunger marchers, men from Jarrow, from South Wales, from the coalfields, from the docklands, marched to Westminster. Not in a militant way: they were just desperate for food. I saw them as they came through Oxford. They had to sleep in town halls, wherever they could get accommodation. And their plea was just to have a reasonable standard of living. This was my first real taste with a system which I regarded as unjust and this led me into Christian socialism.”¹⁹

Huddleston was ordained as a priest in 1937 and, two years later, joined the Community of the Resurrection, a monastic community within the Church of England. He was professed in 1941 taking the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and remained a loyal and steadfast member of his order until his death. The Community was regarded then as “pretty left-wing”²⁰ because so many of its members engaged, as a matter of course, as a normal part of their ministry, with issues of poverty and injustice.

In 1943 Father Huddleston was sent by the Community of the Resurrection to South Africa, where he was made Priest-in-Charge of the Community's Sophiatown and Orlando Anglican Mission, in the Anglican diocese of Johannesburg.

“It was Sophiatown and Soweto that matured me, because I felt apartheid, as it affected the people I was looking after, when I saw every day of my life what apartheid did to them. It was the housing conditions, the pass laws and all that went



with them – the segregated society which had been there for generations. I matured both in my socialism and in my commitment: I believed most strongly that fighting apartheid was a moral battle against something profoundly evil. It didn't come to me through academic reading or study. It came to me through seeing apartheid in its impact on the people who I had responsibility for as a priest."²¹ There is no doubt whatever that Michael Stern was profoundly influenced by Huddleston's commitment to fighting apartheid and that he, too, came to see it as a battle against something intrinsically evil.

In 1949 Huddleston became Provincial of the Community of the Resurrection in South Africa and Superintendent of St Peter's School.

The forced removal of the black community from Sophiatown after the passing of the Group Areas Act saw Father Huddleston come into further conflict with the authorities; as did his decision to close St Peter's School rather than handing it over to governmental control, as the law required, following the passing of the Bantu Education Act. (It was at this point that he recruited Michael Stern to head St Peter's in its closing two years.) His active engagement in the struggle against apartheid brought him friendships with many leaders of the resistance against it, as well as the love and respect of those he worked for. His friendship with Oliver Tambo was particularly close. In 1955 Father Huddleston was awarded the ANC's highest honour, Isitwalandwe, at the historic Congress of the People in Kliptown.

In 1956 Father Huddleston was recalled to England by the Community of the Resurrection to become Guardian of Novices at the mother house at Mirfield and in the same year published *Naught for Your Comfort*, the most powerful indictment of apartheid to date and a stirring account of the struggle for freedom in South Africa. In the book he tells Oliver Tambo's story about his expulsion from the University of Fort Hare for refusing to sign a pledge which his conscience rejected.

"It shows, I think, the quality of faith, the Christian motive at its best. Indeed, it would be hard to find a more devoted churchman than Oliver Tambo. It was for this reason that when I heard that he had been banned in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act I took up my pen and wrote for the *London Observer* an article entitled "And the Church Sleeps On." It seemed to me quite intolerable that the great mass of Christian people in South Africa should remain entirely unmoved when a man of Oliver's stature was victimised in this way ... here was, it seemed to me, a unique opportunity for the Church to protest and demand to be heard on behalf of one of her most faithful sons. She did nothing."²²

This of course was the article which brought Michael Stern to South Africa to do something. The incident also foreshadows Michael's own later conflicts with Church authority, conflicts which led, as a direct consequence, to the founding of Waterford.

Throughout his time in England, Huddleston was constantly engaged in raising awareness of apartheid and racism in South Africa and in organising ways to combat it. He was instrumental in founding the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London in 1959 and served first as its Vice-President and later as its President.

In 1960, Trevor Huddleston returned to Africa as Bishop of the Diocese of Masasi in the south of Tanganyika, where he

worked until 1968 when he returned to England as Bishop of Stepney. In 1978, after ten years in the East End of London, he was next elected Bishop of Mauritius and shortly afterwards became Archbishop of the Anglican Province of the Indian Ocean. In 1983 he retired as Archbishop, came back to London and fully immersed himself in the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

As Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it: "If you could say that anybody single-handedly made apartheid a world issue then that person was Trevor Huddleston".²³ Huddleston's arguments were simple and compelling. "Any doctrine based on racial or colour prejudice and enforced by the State is therefore an affront to human dignity and ipso facto an insult to God himself ... There is no room for compromise or fence sitting."²⁴ Huddleston inspired a multitude of freedom fighters from within and outside the Christian community and among these must be numbered Michael Stern and those who, with him, founded Waterford Kamhlaba. When Michael Stern married Sarah Roberts in 1986, it was Trevor Huddleston who conducted the service.

Trevor Huddleston died at Mirfield in 1998. Nelson Mandela paid the following tribute to him at his memorial service: "All who encountered Father Huddleston in the closing years of our struggle for liberation will know of his longing to see a free South Africa before he died; and his impatience with mere speeches that would exasperate him to exclaim: 'Words, words, words - I am sick of words!' It is therefore with special humility that South Africa joins in this commemoration to convey the sense of loss we feel, as a nation, at Father Huddleston's death, and our abiding gratitude that the vagaries of history brought him to our land. We do so in the knowledge that we are speaking of one who touched the hearts of millions of South Africans. Although he disparaged empty words, this man of action, who also lived a deeply contemplative life, inspired the world to action through his eloquent denunciation of our condition and the realities of forced removal and Bantu education. In the same way he combined a gentle compassion for the victims of injustice with uncompromising hostility to the oppressor. In Father Huddleston we see exemplified in the most concrete way the contribution that religion has made to our liberation."²⁵

Thus was Huddleston directed to return to the Community of the Resurrection's mother house at Mirfield in England to become Guardian of Novices, responsible for the initial training of new recruits to the Community. Reluctantly, not without considerable inner struggle, but loyal to his vow of obedience, he went.²⁶ With his departure, despite the courageous example of a number of clergy and lay people whose commitment remained undiminished, some of the spirit went out of the Church's resistance to apartheid. Now something of a readiness to

compromise, to avoid confrontation in order to safeguard the Church's institutions, began to show itself more strongly. This would have a decided effect on Michael Stern's future decisions.

In October 1955, the Department of Native Affairs approved the registration of St Peter's as a private school for a final year, from 1 January 1956 to 31 December 1956. Strict conditions were imposed; failure to comply with these would lead to de-registration. Only the

examination forms III and V could continue, no student was to be admitted who had not been at the school in 1955, and the approved syllabi had to be followed. It was made completely clear that there would be no such approval for 1957. In January the last 97 students began the school's last year. As well as the demands of the academic work, which were considerable, as standards had inevitably fallen, Michael had to spend much time and effort finding places in other schools for those students who wished to continue their education and helping to find jobs for the staff whose posts would disappear at the end of the year.

In a letter written in February 1957, he wrote:

First there was the problem of dealing with the successful and unsuccessful St Peter's examination candidates, some to be congratulated (all too few, I fear!) and spurred on to other efforts, others to be consoled, and all to be fitted into other schools or into jobs. I want to keep in touch with as many as possible, and I have already had some amusing letters. One boy

tells me he has a 'temporal' job in the City, but is hoping for better things; another is sure he will get into trouble with the police now there is no Headmaster to punish him at regular intervals. A third who celebrated the end of term by walking off with some of the school property, is puzzled by my reluctance to give him a first-class testimonial.²⁷

His final report, in 1957, to the Diocesan Synod was necessarily more formal:

In general it may be said that St Peter's School ran smoothly during the last year of its existence, with no major administrative or disciplinary problems. The prospect of closure inevitably undermined the working tradition of the school, but in view of the uncertainty facing staff and students alike, the standard of work and behaviour was probably as high as the circumstances permitted ...

It was with universal regret that the school finally dispersed on Friday 7th December.²⁸

Chapter 1 Endnotes

- 1 Roy Wake & Pennie Denton, *Bedales School: The First Hundred Years*, 1993.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Approved Schools were residential institutions to which young offenders could be sent by a court. The term 'reform school' is probably more familiar.
- 4 Michael Stern, Collected correspondence
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Quoted in Luise Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, Johannesburg: St Martin's School, 1998, 26.
- 8 Quoted in Luli Callinicos, Oliver Tambo: Beyond the Engeli Mountains, Cape Town: David Philip, 2015, 70.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Luise Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, Johannesburg: St Martin's School, 1998.
- 12 Es'kia Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue*, London: Faber, 1959
- 13 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., 1956, 106.
- 14 Hendrik Verwoerd, Speech as Minister of Native Affairs, 7 June 1954, accessed at www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/hendrik-verwoerd-10-quotes
- 15 Trevor Huddleston, Pamphlet: *Death of a School*, 1954.
- 16 Ibid., 27.
- 17 Ibid., 54.
- 18 Trevor Huddleston: Autobiographical Essay from Archbishop Huddleston's Picture Book. London. Kliptown Books, 1990
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Trevor Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, London: William Collins, 1956, 143.
- 23 Perhaps the Arch puts it a little strongly. He would not, I'm sure, fail to recognise the immense contributions of people like OR Tambo and Bishop Ambrose Reeves in this respect
- 24 Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*.
- 25 Speech by President Nelson Mandela at a memorial service for Father Trevor Huddleston, Johannesburg, 5 May 1998.
- 26 It has been quite frequently suggested that Huddleston's recall was due to the Anglican Church caving in to pressure but there is no proof of this and John Tibbs suggests that "it was probably because of his diabetes that he was recalled to the UK – it is said that the Community thought he would not survive if he was imprisoned – as probably would have been the case." (Personal communication)
- 27 Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 27.
- 28 Ibid.



2

St Martin's^I

More than a year before St Peter's finally closed, discussions about its replacement were already taking place. It would become a secondary school for white boys, using the same buildings and grounds. In his August 1956 report on St Peter's to the Synod of the Diocese of Johannesburg, Michael Stern was explicit: "From January 1957, the property, grounds and buildings of the school will be prepared for the opening of St Martin's Secondary School for European boys in January 1958."² The Bishop of Johannesburg, Ambrose Reeves, was clearly the originator and driver of this new phase; in his Headmaster's speech at the opening of the new school, Michael³ said, "The Bishop, as you know, conceived the idea of St Martin's School ..."⁴

Bishop Ambrose Reeves

Ambrose Reeves, "our Bishop", as many Africans called him, was Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg for eleven years, until the South African government deported him in September 1960. As a visitor to South Africa during those years remarked, "No good cause, no suffering individual, no frightened victim of some government policy hesitated to seek help from this man, whose great energy and wisdom sparked and guided and challenged. Were there mass arrests, the Bishop would find money to defend the accused; were there students protesting the closing of their universities to non-whites, the Bishop

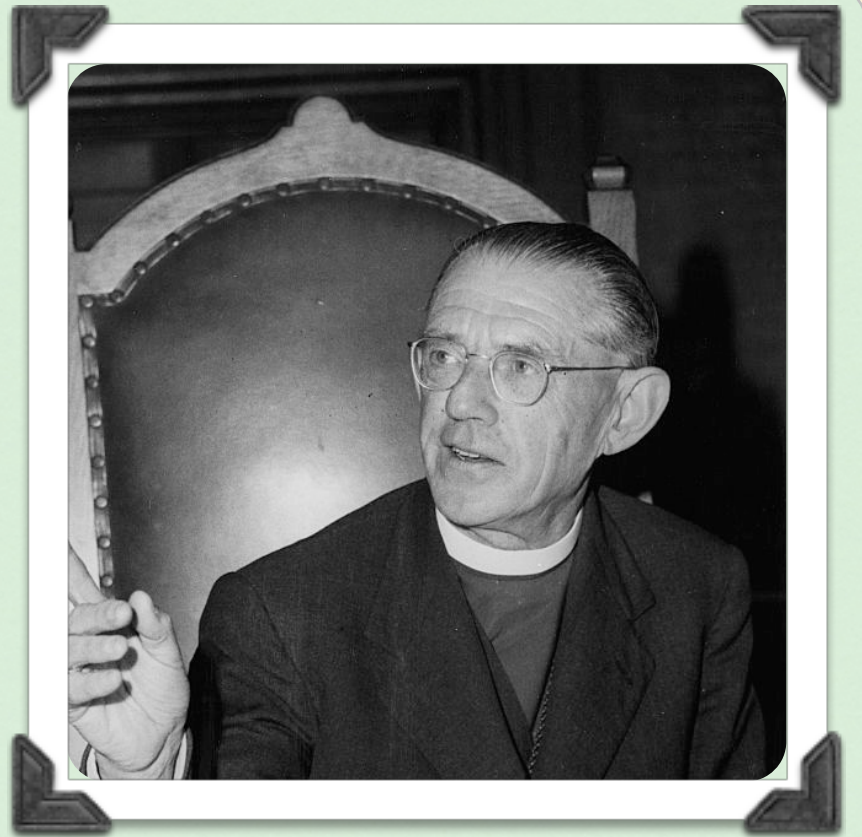
would be there to inspire. Was there a great threat of mass evictions, see the Bishop, he would know what to do – he would get money, or speak out, or soothe clashing points of view."⁵

Ambrose Reeves was born in Norwich, England in 1889. His father, a chemist, died when Reeves was still very young. The family struggled financially; Ambrose's education came through scholarships, which he set himself with great determination to win. After the First World War, he studied history at Cambridge but he was already immersed in the social problems of post-war Britain, particularly the problem of unemployment and the conditions of working people. He was also deeply interested in student affairs and, after his ordination to the Anglican priesthood, worked for several years with the Student Christian

Movement. In 1937, he and his wife Margaret and their four children moved to Liverpool, where he became the rector of an inner-city parish. Liverpool at the time was a focal point of unemployment and was heavily bombed a few years later, during the Second World War. As he wrote then: "The Church has to bear the burden of the slums which are the product of industrial civilisation with all the degradation and vice that they cause ... The Church has to share the shame and the trickery and dishonesty which pass for good business; The Church has to know the anguish of the ruthlessness of Civil War and the futility of international war."⁶

Reeves's direct and effective involvement in social issues earned him a widespread reputation not only in Liverpool but much further afield as well. In 1948 he was a delegate to the founding Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam, where he was elected to the Central Committee and Executive Council. In the following year, 1949, he was elected Bishop by the Diocese of Johannesburg.

With his acute sense of social justice, Bishop Reeves was soon involved in opposition to the developing policy of apartheid. His reaction to the introduction of Bantu Education and the government's plans to take over church schools was uncompromising: "Whatever the cost, we must make it plain to the Government, the members of our Church and all the African people that we disagree so profoundly with the policy ... that we cannot be a party to it in any shape or form."⁷ Rather than sell the church schools to the government, as the Bantu Education Act required, he led his diocese in closing them down – a move which led, as we have seen, to the closing of St Peter's in 1956, some 18 months after Michael Stern's appointment as its last head. Of this decision to close the church schools serving black pupils, Trevor Huddleston wrote: "I believe history will vindicate the Bishop's courageous and lonely stand ... the hardest thing, perhaps in the world, is to stand by the principle to the end ... It is much harder when one is caught up into the deep and bitter suffering of the people one loves most dearly."⁸



In 1956 the government arrested 155 of its opponents and charged them with high treason. The subsequent trial dragged on for five years. On the day of the arrests the Bishop agreed to become chairman of a defence fund, which hired the best lawyers available and also provided for the needs of families who had been left destitute by the arrest of breadwinners. After all the trialists were finally acquitted, one of them said: "The Bishop was the moving spirit in rallying many freedom-loving South Africans of all colours, creeds and shades of opinion. This five years of our lives was made bearable by their support."⁹

Naturally, Bishop Reeves' steadfast acting on his principles earned him the animosity of the government and police, and also of many white members of his own church who saw him as a dangerous troublemaker.

On 21 March 1960 the Sharpeville Massacre changed everything: "... there can be no argument over the devastating consequences of the action of the police on March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville. Sixty-nine people were killed, including eight women and ten children, and of the 180 people who were wounded, thirty-one were women and nineteen were children. According to the evidence of medical practitioners it is clear that the police continued firing after the people began to flee: for, while thirty shots had entered the wounded or killed from the front of their bodies no less than 155 bullets had entered the bodies of the injured and killed from their backs. All this happened in forty seconds, during which time 705 rounds were fired from revolvers and sten guns. But whatever weapons were used the massacre was horrible. Visiting the wounded the next day in Baragwanath Hospital near Johannesburg, I discovered youngsters, women and elderly men among the injured. These could not be described as agitators by any stretch of the imagination. For the most part they were ordinary citizens who had merely gone to the Sharpeville police station to see what was going on. Talking with the wounded I found that everyone was stunned and mystified by what had taken place. They had certainly not expected that anything like this would happen. All agreed that there was no provocation for such savage action by the police. Indeed, they insisted that the political organisers who had called for the demonstration had constantly insisted that there should be no violence or fighting."¹⁰

Typically, the Bishop became immediately and practically involved: as well as visiting the wounded, he arranged to legal representation for them and organised contact with the families of those killed and wounded to help with their problems and welfare needs. However, he decided the intervention this time had to go further: the facts surrounding the massacre needed to be made known worldwide. The government had declared a state of emergency immediately following the massacre and thousands of people were being arrested. Bishop Reeves feared, with reason, that steps would be taken to silence him and so he left the country, first going to Swaziland and then to the United Kingdom, where he had been due to take long leave. He knew he would be heavily criticised for "running away", but felt that he had no alternative. He stayed in England until September, writing, broadcasting and addressing public meetings and contacting the United Nations, all his efforts focused on making the world aware of what had happened at Sharpeville.

Two days after his return to Johannesburg he was issued with a deportation order and without being given any chance to contact a lawyer, was taken to the airport and immediately put on a plane. The outspoken Johannesburg newspaper,

the *Rand Daily Mail*, commented in an editorial: "The Deportation is an event of immense and horrifying significance ... Bishop Reeves is a forthright man of God ... Quite rightly he sees no borderline between "politics" and "religion"... he spoke up for Africans living under apartheid, he enjoyed the confidence of African leaders, he thought the police acted wrongly at Sharpeville and said so, and to crown it all, he saw that his views were well known overseas. So he had to be eliminated."¹¹ In 1980, Bishop Reeves became the sixth recipient of the ANC's highest award, *Isitwalandwe* (the one who wears the plumes of the rare bird), in recognition of his leadership and heroism in the struggle for freedom and justice.

Prime Minister Harold Macmillan refused to appoint him Bishop of Ely when he was nominated for that position, quite clearly, it would seem, to avoid giving offence to the National Party Government.

Ambrose Reeves was also the father-in-law of Rev John Tibbs who is, very correctly, regarded as one of Waterford's founders. Reeves himself, like Huddleston, was a huge influence on the thinking, the convictions and the impetus that led to Waterford.

It seems strange that Michael Stern, who had come to South Africa to oppose what he and Bishop Trevor Huddleston saw as the sin of apartheid, should have involved himself in a project catering for whites only. He had other options and, as mentioned by Randolph Vigne in the obituary he wrote on Michael in the *London Independent*, for a while at least, he seriously considered becoming the national organiser of the strongly anti-apartheid Liberal Party. Some have ascribed his decision to the influence of Bishop Reeves,¹² whom Michael certainly admired, while others believe that Michael would have hoped to in due course admit boys of other races to the new school. Possibly, the truth is a combination of both. Michael's own rationale seems perhaps just a little hesitant from someone usually so emphatic:

"It is my belief that by trying to establish a good school for young Europeans we can at least make some small contribution to right thinking in this country and in the long run that can only be of benefit to all ..."¹³

From today's distance, it seems naïve to have believed that other races might soon be included at St Martin's. The clamps of apartheid policy were rapidly being tightened, and if there were such a hope, it was certainly best not to express it openly. Peter Klatzow, who was there at the time, writes that Michael Stern wasn't able to realise his dream that St Martin's "could be what Waterford (eventually) became",¹⁴ implying that Michael and his staff had indeed at some stage considered it possible. Jean Richardson confirms this in her memoir:

"After the swimming-bath incident, Michael realised that he would not be able to admit black and coloured and Asian pupils to St Martin's. And so Waterford was born."¹⁵ (More about the swimming-bath incident to come.)

This is also confirmed by Alan MacGregor who was, albeit only briefly, a student at St Martin's, one of the first sixteen at Waterford and, in later years, Michael's close friend and probably also his closest confidante.

Whatever his reasons for undertaking the project might have been, once he no longer had to run St Peter's, Michael typically put all his energies into getting St Martin's started – and those energies, as all who knew him will witness, were prodigious. As Peter Klatzow, one of the early St Martin's students and later a volunteer member of the first group of Waterford staff, wrote, "he simply crackled with action and energy."¹⁶

The most immediate concerns were funding, staff and student recruitment. The fundraising – undertaken by a professional in the field – seems to have gone well from the start, and by mid 1957 there was £250 000 in the bank, prompting Michael to write:

"It is of course sad to think that all this is being built on the ashes of St Peter's, and to realise that it is so much easier to raise funds for European education than for African ...

measured against the poverty in the townships and the infamous choice which the Government saw fit to give the Native School Boards – limited grants to be spent on more school equipment or more food – something is a little out of proportion. But failing to found St Martin's would in no way benefit the Africans."¹⁷

Here, too, Michael seems, uncharacteristically, to be rather defensive. Contributing to the success of the fundraising was the fact that, while most local private schools were in the affluent northern suburbs of Johannesburg, St Martin's would be deliberately catering for boys from a much poorer area.

Staff recruitment for St Martin's was to have an enormous impact on Waterford. Gordon Milne, Jim and Jean Richardson, John Tibbs and Barry Stocken of the founding St Martin's staff all later came to Waterford; Gordon and the Richardsons as the very first staff on the site.

Jim and Jean Richardson

Tony Hatton's introduction of Jim and Jean in *Phoenix Rising* is well worth repeating:

"Jim is a carpenter by training, his wife Jean is one of those rare people whose capacity for doing things for others seems boundless. Both possess in full measure the warmth and friendliness for which the North of England is justly renowned. From them a Swazi labourer and an African king would (and did!) receive the same courtesy and hospitality – though Jim might put on a tie if he knew he was going to meet a king! They had joined the staff at St Martin's before its opening in 1958 and had been persuaded to join the Waterford project. Jim was to take charge of the building and Jean was to take charge of Jim and their five children and later to be the first matron. It is impossible to imagine better people for these tasks."¹⁸

What Tony left unsaid, though clearly implied, was that a deep religious faith, a faith based on the commandment to love God and one's neighbour and never self-righteous or prissy, permeated every aspect of their lives.

Very fortunately, much of the story of the Richardsons has been told by Jean herself as, at Michael Stern's urging, she wrote a succinct but detailed and lively memoir of the family's background and years in Africa.

Jim and I were engaged in 1952 and a young curate from our church in Blyth, Northumberland came home on furlough after five years in Zululand. On asking when we were to marry we told him as soon as we could find a house or flat - houses were few and far between, as folks were still being rehoused after the war. He told us he could give us a house and an interesting job to go with it at St Augustine's Mission in Zululand! Well, we were married a few months later and in January 1953 we arrived at the mission which is about 35 miles outside Dundee, Natal.

We spent five wonderfully happy years there. Jim was the Headmaster of the Industrial School and he was also Boarding Master of the High School's boys' hostel. I was Mission Secretary in between having our three sons, all born at the Charles Johnson Hospital in Nqutu.

Then came the Bantu Education Act and all small schools like ours were to be closed. So Jim began job hunting. Just then a CR brother came to stay at our Mission and he suggested that he wrote to Fr Sidebotham who was CR Provincial at the time as he thought that there might be work for Jim at Penhalonga. Jim was keen to stay in African education if possible. The day that Fr Sidebotham was about to reply saying that there were no vacancies at Penhalonga, Michael Stern came to see him. He told him his new school was almost ready to be opened but he had not yet found anyone to teach Woodwork and do the general maintenance. So Fr Sidebotham suggested we went to see Michael. As a result we moved to St Martin's in January 1958.

It was exciting being at the beginning of a new venture which had many adventures as well. I became assistant matron ... and I ran the school tuck-shop in between having our two daughters.

On Sundays Jim went to church with the boys and staff at the school but the kids and I (pram and all) went to St Peter's with the fathers and the theological students in the College Chapel. They always made us very welcome. We became very good friends with the students and they often came to our house for a cup of tea on their afternoon off.¹⁹

One day a group of students and I were sitting in our garden drinking tea when our eldest, Andrew, came home from school bringing a friend with him. When his friend saw the students he ran off and when I asked Andrew why his friend had gone, the reply came that he'd gone because his mother was having tea with "kaffirs". Andrew was only eight at the time and was in danger of becoming an outcast from some of his school friends because his parents had black friends. So it was time to think of leaving.

After the swimming bath incident, Michael realised that he would not be able to admit black and coloured and Asian pupils to St Martin's. And so Waterford was born.²⁰

Jim and Jean left Waterford in 1970 to return to Northumberland and, for that year's edition of *Phoenix*, the school magazine, Stephen Turner, then Head Boy, wrote this tribute to them:

Whatever one says in a tribute to the Richardsons is bound to be superficial and inadequate, but such a tribute is obviously fitting and deserves the attention of anybody connected with Waterford Kamhlaba.

The family arrived on the site in 1962 from St Martin's, via England, to construct the first buildings for the school to use the following year. They lived in the rondavels, which at that time had no eaves so that the mist tended to accumulate in the upper strata of the rooms, and the family's manual assistance was sometimes used for brickmaking.

In those days and for 7 1/2 years to come, Mr Richardson worked with dedication and skill at the formidable task of building a school halfway up a mountain with a constant dearth of money, skilled labour and professional knowledge, and under the unrelenting pressure of deadlines. In addition, as the school grew, he became burdened by the many maintenance jobs that were necessary, such as making daily checks of the water supply, organising repainting and plumbing and keeping the swimming pool clean and safe. He took on the job of woodwork instructor, which he did for some years on rickety benches outside the engine room, and taught Divinity.²¹

Mrs Richardson set up her first kitchen in what is now the old surgery, moving in 1964 to the present one. She made Waterford food what it is – complaints are constant, but a comparison with other institutional food is sobering and makes one realise we do pretty well here. Two marks of her concern are the fact that her family normally ate the same food as the school and that Mrs Richardson was in the kitchen at 6:30 am on her duty days.²² As a matron, she supervised everything concerning our clothing, food and, in the early days, health, offering advice when it was requested and brightening our day with a friendly greeting at breakfast.

The Richardsons, through their humble, hard-working dedication did much to inspire this school's success, especially in those lean early years, and their pioneer spirit, which embodied so much of what Waterford Kamhlaba stands for, never left them or ceased to affect us. They had such close ties with Waterford that it was hard to imagine the place without them, but now they have gone. The school is at last able to stand without them, but it will never forget their part in making that possible.

One is tempted to say of the Richardsons that they represented "the salt of the earth", but this phrase has perhaps come to sound just a little condescending. And the idea of being condescending towards Jim and Jean Richardson is simply absurd.



Michael Stern and Gordon Milne first met as colleagues at the Cotswold Approved School in 1948, when Michael joined the staff there. Visiting England over Christmas in 1956, Michael contacted Gordon and asked him to join him at St Martin's as Second Master when

it opened in January 1958. "His reaction was immediate, typical and decisive ... His commitment was total."²³ At the same time he also recruited Barry Stocken, whom he had taught at Worksop in his first years of teaching after leaving Cambridge.

Gordon Milne

Michael Stern and Gordon Milne met in 1948 at the Cotswold Approved School – "where, typically," as Michael recalled, "he was digging a ditch in the mud with some young delinquents ... I joined him in the mud and that was the beginning of a friendship, a collaboration that lasted for thirty-seven years."²⁴

Although Gordon's background – public school, distinguished war service as an RAF officer, Cambridge – seemed, by many criteria, to be comfortably and unexceptionally of the privileged British middle classes, the reality was considerably different. His family on both sides had, for several generations, served in the Indian and Ceylonese Civil Service at the height of the British Empire's rule over those countries, but his father had gone into the army and was severely wounded in the First World War. He remained a chronic invalid, suffering intense pain for the rest of his life, unable to resume his career or, indeed, to work at all, and required continuous nursing care and regular administrations of morphine. His military pension couldn't provide for these expenses so Mrs Milne nursed him herself until his early death. Determined that her two sons would have the public school education she felt necessary, she took a job as a matron at Cheltenham College to get the benefit of the reduced fees available to staff. A matron in such schools, while very much a figure of authority and considerable responsibility, was still considered as a sort of upper domestic and this must have created difficulties for Gordon and his brother in a very class-conscious environment.

The Second World War was in its second year by the time Gordon finished school and he immediately followed his older brother (a Battle of Britain fighter pilot ace) into the Royal Air Force, also as a fighter pilot. He flew numerous missions over France and Germany, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross and there is no doubt that his wartime experience, coming at such an early age, was deeply formative, though he seldom spoke of it. The difficulties – perhaps trauma is not too strong a word, though he himself would have abhorred it – of his childhood and adolescence and his war experience almost certainly compounded and intensified his natural emotional and social reserve.

After the war, Gordon took up the place which Cambridge had offered when he left school and, once he had completed his degree and after a stint as tutor to the Duke of Gloucester's two sons, took a job with Shell. After a year of this, he knew it wouldn't satisfy him and so he went into teaching, first to the Cotswold Approved School and, eventually, to Waterford.

"I remember coming to England in 1957 and telephoning him in the hope that he might be interested in a new liberal Christian school we wanted to start in Johannesburg. His response was immediate, typical and decisive ... his commitment was total. He became a superbly good housemaster and a marvelously loyal deputy, whose wit and wisdom,

ingenuity and dedication were a source of inspiration as much to me as to the rest of the staff and, of course, to the boys, many of whom worshipped him, and to parents, governors and all. Those same high standards which sometimes caused trouble to himself and to others were the making of the school."²⁵

Although no one could think of Gordon as particularly politically minded, his strong sense of justice and a bone-deep commitment to fairness meant that opposition to apartheid was an inevitable consequence of his move to St Martin's: in fact, not only did he find racism abhorrent as a matter of principle, he found its crassness and vulgarity personally offensive. So, with Michael, he joined protest marches, he helped to foster the "liberal" ethos of the school, he found it perfectly natural that black domestic staff should use the swimming pool and he was equally outraged by what they perceived as the hypocrisy of the Anglican establishment the clergy retreat.²⁶ Significantly, in the letter informing parents of their resignation from St Martin's, Gordon's signature preceded Michael's.

Michael and Gordon were two very different personalities: Michael driven, impetuous, charismatic, Gordon considered, painstakingly thorough, uncomfortable in the limelight. Both, though, were quick-tempered and John Tibbs recalled that "their rows were frequent and fierce". Nevertheless, they worked together closely and effectively because of their shared basic values and a strong sense of duty towards others, and a deep and lasting bond developed.

In his personal memoir, *Phoenix Rising*, Tony Hatton wrote: "Gordon is a superb organiser, a perfectionist who spares neither himself nor others in the successful completion of a task and was to play an inestimably valuable part in the foundation of Waterford. Without him it is doubtful that the idea would have come to fruition."²⁷

There was never any question of Gordon settling permanently in Southern Africa: he was too essentially English ever to be really content anywhere else. Once Waterford was safely launched, he felt he could go back. In Tony Hatton's words: "Gordon had been persuaded to postpone his return to England in order to help with the founding of Waterford and with this accomplished he departed in December 1963. He left with the good wishes and thanks not only of the parents but of all his colleagues, but very nearly in a literal blaze of glory. A few nights before his departure, his caravan on the hilltop was enveloped in a veld fire and consumed."²⁸

That, however was not the end: Throughout 1965, Michael had obviously felt an ever more pressing need for Gordon's return and eventually persuaded him to do so in January 1966 as head of a newly-established Junior School. He stayed on this time until December 1970 and I can think of no better tribute than Tony Hatton's: "His importance to the school had been second only to Michael's and, as for Michael, it could be said that "without him there would be no Waterford". He had shared in the birth of the idea back in 1961; he had taken charge of the building and other operations on site in 1962 and thereafter he was always very much Number Two. For Michael he was both a stimulus and a brake."²⁹

Gordon was still teaching Maths at a prep school near Ipswich when he died in 1985.

Not long after Gordon and the Richardsons arrived at St Martin's, they were joined by Deon Glover, who came from Jeppe Boys' High in 1959, and, in 1964, Bob and Ione Roseveare, who had been at Michaelhouse for nine years. Lucas Matlosi was another early arrival who later moved from being a laboratory assistant at St Martin's to doing the same job at Waterford, where he established himself as a familiar and affectionately-regarded fixture until he left to train as a Science teacher.

As St Martin's was an Anglican Church school, a chaplain was part of the staff establishment, and Rev John Tibbs was appointed to this position. John married Margaret-Anne, the daughter of Bishop Reeves, in itself an indication of where he stood with regard to the prevalent racism of white South Africans. Although never on the staff at Waterford, John played an important part in the planning stages and was the school's honorary chaplain during his time as Rector of All Saints' Church in Mbabane from 1963 to 1968.

John Tibbs

John described in a letter how he had come to St Martin's and spoke thus of his relationship with Michael Stern:

Michael and his brother Peter lived from before the war at Maryfield, Lynchmere Ridge near Haslemere in Sussex with their mother who was married to Colonel Hamilton (their stepfather), a Member of Parliament. My father Geoffrey Tibbs was Vicar of Lynchmere and had prepared Michael for confirmation after the war when he was going into teaching, so from the age of about nine I knew the family quite well. Later, Michael (we called him Mick) helped to lead a church youth group and took a funny part in the annual Village pantomime. I was in my third year as a curate when Mick asked me if I would be interested to go and join him as chaplain in opening St Martin's School in the January of 1958.

Having read 'Cry the Beloved Country' and seen the (black and white) film several times I immediately decided that this is what I was called to do, so I joined the skeleton staff in October 1957 to help prepare for the opening. As a diocesan priest (not paid by the school), I took on duties as a hospital chaplain and priest of St Mary-the-Less in Jeppestown during the five years that followed. Margaret Anne and I got engaged a few weeks before the shooting at Sharpeville in March 1960 and when the Bishop (Reeves) went to Swaziland with the outline of the book he wished to write to expose the awfulness of what had happened, I used to spend nights at Bishop's House to be a man about the place because there was a fear that the women and the young Nicholas might be in some kind of danger. They went off to the UK for leave which had been already planned, and joined the Bishop in England. Margaret Anne and I were married in England on 3 September because there was no way the Bishop could be sure of getting back to South Africa to conduct the marriage in Johannesburg. A week later he flew back to Johannesburg and was there for three days when he was deported.³⁰

A few months after St Martin's had opened, Michael wrote home: "John Tibbs ... really is first-class. I have yet to hear

him preach a dull sermon, and already there is a unique attitude towards religion in the school – a remarkable interest and sympathy, which are so unlike the spirit you find in many schools. That is largely John's doing, for naturally a chaplain makes or breaks school religion. John is both simple and direct on the one hand and light and interesting on the other."³¹

The clergy retreat crisis raised particular difficulties for John: as a diocesan priest, he came under the authority of Bishop Stradling but, as school chaplain and a member of St Martin's staff, his loyalty was to the ideals on which Michael and Bishop Reeves had founded the school and the staff had tried to bring to reality so consciously and with such commitment. Therefore, like Michael and Gordon, he resigned. Although he had been involved in some of the discussions about starting a new school, it was clear by then that, although Christian in its orientation, what Michael and Gordon were planning was not going to be a Church school and there would be no school chaplain:

... so I dropped out of the planning. Having left St Martin's for the UK at the end of 1963 I got a temporary job as curate of St Thomas-on-the-Bourne in Farnham Surrey, and we waited for a letter from Bishop Tom Savage, Bishop of Zululand and Swaziland to tell us to which parish he was sending us in his diocese. We had met with him and he had promised me a job. Eventually the letter came with the offer of the job of Rector of Mbabane and Director of the Mission in Mbabane. It was a happy coincidence that I was able to be the first honorary chaplain of Waterford and for a year or so the boys and Michael used to come to the early morning Eucharist (in one of the Kombis that they loved in those days) at All Saints Church and became the church choir.

I used to have deep and meaningful talks with Michael in the years that followed but I was not privy to the ins and outs of the way Waterford operated, though I did go there sometimes to speak at an assembly or, more regularly, to conduct a non-denominational service.³²

In 1969, John and Margaret-Anne left Swaziland "because of my developing chronic asthma there"³³ and returned to the UK, ending up in Bedford where John retired as Canon Tibbs in 2014 and died in 2016 at the age of 88.

In a letter to the *Church Times* in 2006, at the height of the Anglican Communion's agonising over homosexuality, John wrote: "The way forward will best be found through understanding, teaching, love, and non-judgemental compassion." This sums up perfectly his attitude towards his priestly vocation, towards his relationships and towards life as a whole.

A friend wrote of him, shortly after his death, "John Tibbs had an amazing capacity to connect with people. This could happen in an instant. It's hard to account for. The sparkling eyes, the mischievous smile, the uncanny empathy, the genuine warmth. Yes, John had all those things. He could be a charmer – and a flirt, too. But people could spend a few minutes with John, and find it transformation. They came away with their hearts warmed. What accounts for that? When John preached a sermon, or presided at the Eucharist, or visited a bedside, somehow his style invited people to focus not to him, but through him to the presence of Christ. His humility and self-surrender made him a transparent priest. The Greeks said, 'We wish to see Jesus'. They don't come asking for information about Jesus. They don't inquire about a new member's class or ask to join a committee. They don't request a statement of beliefs before joining. They simply want to see Jesus. To meet him, person to person, face to face. In John Tibbs, maybe we have."³⁴

St Martin's opened in January 1958 with 88 boys, 44 boarders and 44 day students, all white,³⁵ of course, and nine staff. The official opening took place in April with Bishop Reeves officiating. Michael's speech included this summary of the school's aims: "We want to teach people to learn and to go on learning. We want to produce men and not machines. We want to produce the whole man, the Christian man, the Christian gentleman. We want to promote clear thinking and kindly feelings towards other people and towards all other people, regardless of colour or race. We want to teach the idea of worship and service, the Pauline dictum that true service is perfect freedom."³⁶

As a visible indication of what Michael meant, Nimrod Tubane, the school's black bookkeeper, came to the staffroom for tea and was included in the annual staff photograph. It says a great deal about the outlook at the time that for some this was regarded, with a degree of pride, as an indication of the school's intrinsic commitment

to liberal values, rather than as a perfectly normal way to act. It's difficult to imagine that Michael or Gordon ever contemplated any other course of action.

By the end of the year, Michael could justifiably feel that there was every sign that the school would be a success: "I already have received more applications than we can take for 1960 and lists right up to 1972 with a grand total of some 400 on the books."³⁷ In 1959, the year opened with 170 boys and 12 staff, and by 1961, enrolment had reached what was regarded as its optimum number of 250. One of the new staff was Deon Glover, who came from Jeppe Boys High and had been invited to join St Martin's because, Gordon once told me, he and Michael had been so impressed by his scrupulous fairness and positive attitude while refereeing a rugby match – St Martin's at that stage being no match for one of Johannesburg's top sporting schools.

Deon Glover

Deon, despite the very English-sounding surname, was an Afrikaner – a most unusual one for the time and place of his upbringing – but he was an unusual man. Born and brought up in Krugersdorp, a mining town close to Johannesburg, he went, since the family was thoroughly bilingual, to the local English medium high school and then on to Wits University, also English and widely regarded as a hotbed of liberalism. He financed his university studies through a bursary from the Transvaal Education

Department, which required him to teach in government

(white, of course) schools for five years after qualifying. During vacations, he worked as a steward on the South African Railways, which not only provided him with some much-needed money but also with a fund of stories for later.



He was already, it seems, politically aware before going to Wits, but this intensified during his time there and he became actively involved, first with NUSAS, the anti-apartheid student organisation, and later with more radical political groups. He said later that what frightened him about the possibility of a banning order was that this invariably meant being restricted to one's magisterial district of origin – in Deon's case, Krugersdorp – for five years.

After qualifying, he began teaching at Jeppe Boys High, one of Johannesburg's earliest and most famous schools and it was there, refereeing junior rugby against St Martin's, that he met Michael and Gordon who were, Gordon told us many years later, so impressed by his scrupulously fair but keenly judicious handling of a match between two unequal teams that they decided to offer him a job.³⁸ Deon joined St Martin's in 1959 and fitted easily and naturally into the liberal ethos of the staff at the time – summed up by Peter Klatzow as "on the whole an easy-natured and genial collection of intelligent lefties ... it was Shakespeare, *Groot Verseboek*, chemistry demos and rugby during the day, smuggling refugees across the border by night".³⁹

Deon completely identified with the attitudes of Michael and the core staff during both the swimming pool controversy and the more conclusive clergy retreat saga, and was already part of the initial planning during the Swaziland work camps for a school in Swaziland independent of the Anglican Church. He would have resigned from St Martin's with Michael, Gordon, John Tibbs and the Richardsons in 1962 and been in at the start of Waterford, but Michael asked him to wait a year, partly because he didn't want to be accused of taking all of the top St Martin's staff with him, but also partly because there wasn't the money for Waterford to pay another teacher in that first year.⁴⁰ Obviously Deon was keenly disappointed to miss out, even for a relatively short time, on something he had helped to plan and in which he deeply believed but it was typical of him that he unhesitatingly and cheerfully accepted the necessity for it.

When he did come to Waterford, in 1964, he at once became a mainstay of the school. Like the other staff, he had multiple roles: gifted and inspiring Geography teacher, firm but sympathetic and understanding Guedes housemaster, athletics coach – for many years Waterford relay teams had no real rivals at the annual Swaziland Schools competitions – and, always, a source of encouragement and support for anyone who needed it. From the start, he was an integral and essential, though never pushy, part of Waterford's management, bringing not only total commitment but balance and perspective when sometimes very difficult decisions had to be made.

Georgina Bain joined the school in 1966 to teach English and she and Deon were married, with John Tibbs officiating, in 1968. Deon's contributions to the life of the school now became doubly effective, the Glovers as a couple becoming an integral part of the growth and development of the school and a mainstay of its cultural life as well. This growth and development saw Deon's role also growing and he was, in effect, Michael's deputy in many respects. This was recognised when Michael took a sabbatical term in 1973 and Deon became acting Head in his absence. The term became a year when Michael unexpectedly announced his resignation in September. Being an acting head is more difficult than the real thing: one has all the responsibility but neither the time nor the authority to give real shape to the role. Nevertheless, it was a role Deon filled with great distinction and his usual self-effacing efficiency, tact and foresight until the arrival of

Athol Jennings as Waterford's second Head.

Deon did not apply for the headship: like several of the senior staff at the time, he recognised that the pioneering days were coming to a close, that the school needed a period of consolidation and that the presence of too many of the old guard could inhibit the development of necessary new approaches. So he went to Atlantic College, spending the rest of his teaching career there, as deputy head for many years and playing a crucial role in Waterford becoming a United World College.

I've outlined the bare facts about Deon but how to convey the essence of the man? He wasn't physically big but one always saw him as a big man: the warmth, the generosity, the laugh, the loyalty, the idealism, the refusal to countenance any sort of falsity, the enthusiasm, the overflowing humanity were all on a scale larger and more intense than the ordinary.

Deon died of leukaemia in 2008.

1959 seems to have been a year of determined progress for St Martin's, without any major upheavals. 1960 was very different. First, there was Sharpeville. On 21 March, without any warning, police fired on a crowd of about 5 000 unarmed people protesting against the pass laws, killing at least 69 – many shot in the back as they turned to run away – and wounding over 200. The government's response was to ban the ANC and PAC and to steadily enact ever more repressive legislation to stifle any opposition. It

was by now more than ever apparent that bringing black students into St Martin's was a lost cause. Bishop Reeves's response, both immediate and in the slightly longer term, led to his deportation in September 1960. In the same month, the application by the St Martin's Society to establish a multi-racial boys' school in Swaziland was a further indication that liberal-minded South Africans had given up hope of any prospect of change, and that even more draconian laws were to be expected.

The St Martin's Society Swaziland Project

The St Martin's Society was founded in April 1958, only a couple of months after St Martin's School opened, and had as its cornerstone a committee of some fifteen people, one of whom was Michael Stern. In a brochure published later the same year, the Society described itself as:

[an] unique society in South Africa. Taking its name from St Martin's School it has been founded by people who have at heart the ideals of Church School education and the welfare of St Martin's in particular. The Society has as its objectives to bring together people who feel the need to strengthen and extend Church School education by taking a positive interest in the development and welfare of St Martin's; to ensure that through the provision of adequate capital and endowment funds, the school is enabled to achieve the objects for which it was founded; to inspire all

those who believe in the continued life of Church Schools to work with energy and purpose for their development; to assist the School Council and Staff in any way, but is essentially a separate entity which wishes to further Church School education.⁴¹

So, while very closely associated with St Martin's School, the Society's aims and interests were not restricted to St Martin's, but also included the much broader ambition of strengthening and extending (Anglican) Church School education generally. It was in this broader realm that the Society was to play an intriguing, though little-known part in the founding of Waterford Kamhlaba.

On June 22 1960, a Mr Anthony Tugman⁴² wrote to the Resident Commissioner in Mbabane, Brian Marwick, requesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of St Martin's Society establishing a multi-racial school for boys in Swaziland. Mr Marwick was away but Tugman met with another official of the colonial government, a Mr Armstrong, in July and was sufficiently encouraged to seek another meeting with Marwick in September, this time with four other members of the St Martin's Society, to seek permission to start such a school. A long discussion of both the ideals underlying the project and the practicalities involved (including the emphatic statement that the Swaziland Government could not contemplate giving any financial assistance), "It was agreed that a formal application with as much details (sic) as possible should be presented to the Swaziland Government by the St Martin's Society and that the administration would make known its decision on the matter to the Society as soon as possible thereafter."⁴³ Michael Stern was not at this meeting and seems to have played only a supportive role at this stage.

The Society lost no time in preparing the formal application and a three-page document was submitted on 9 September. In October, Mr Tugman again travelled to Mbabane and met with the Director of Education, William Pitcher, to whom he gave a "SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CHURCH SCHOOL IN SWAZILAND AND PROGRESS TO DATE."⁴⁴

Among its observations were:

- The Church Schools (in South Africa) are all situated in European areas and are prevented by recent legislation from accepting children other than of European descent ... If, therefore, unfettered development is to be fostered it is necessary to go outside the borders of the Union of South Africa while the present government policies are adhered to.
- It will accept children of all races as long as they are able to meet the standard of academic achievement required and so fulfil the ideals of the Church schools in South Africa, which are prohibited by Law from accepting other than European children."
- No mention was made of the fact that Church schools of all denominations had always been racially segregated long before any legislation was introduced.
- And, "By retaining the characteristics of the Church schools in South Africa and the English public schools, it is hoped that the school will become the nursery of future leaders in Southern Africa of all races who will, by their growing up

together, be in a better position to work together in later life." While by no means radical, such statements from a group of South African men of an inherently conservative class and background are both surprising and admirable. Less so, perhaps, is the paragraph which follows, as it shows no awareness of the fact that Swaziland's independence, if not exactly imminent, was certainly inevitable.

- "By being established in Swaziland, the project will quite clearly be a British undertaking designed along British lines ..."
- And finally: "The school will be planned to take 300 pupils and the fundraising target is set at £500,000, of which £300,000 will be used for land, buildings, playing fields and equipment and £200,00 to provide scholarships and bursaries." These, no doubt, were the figures which provoked a pencilled note from Mr Pitcher to the Resident Commissioner: "I have no objection in principle to multi-racial education but they will never raise the money."⁴⁵ Words which were to prove prophetic.

Nevertheless, on 1 November 1960, the Department of Education gave its approval for the establishment of the proposed school. For thirteen months after the Colonial Government's approval of the St Martin's Society project, nothing seemed to happen, although a great deal was happening at St Martin's School itself: in the same month as approval was granted for the Swaziland venture, there was the swimming bath episode at St Martin's and Michael, Gordon and some of the staff started thinking about a new school, separate from St Martin's, "... in some other part of Africa."⁴⁶ Then, in January 1962 came the clergy retreat crisis and the situation crystallised with Michael and Gordon's resignations.

Very shortly afterwards, on 16 February 1962, Tugman, who had all along been the driving force behind the St Martin's Society's Swaziland plans, wrote a long report to the Chairman of the Society. After detailing the unsuccessful attempts of the Swaziland Committee to secure funding in Britain and the US, and the British High Commission in South Africa's refusal to commit funding of any kind, he ended the first page of the letter: "The urgent requirements of St Martin's School and the fact that the time is not entirely ripe for the establishment of the Swaziland school have brought me to the following conclusion: ... that we should not proceed with the idea of starting on a predetermined date but rather attempt to establish the Swaziland school when the need for it appears obvious to both Government and private supporters."⁴⁷

He went on: "From October to December 1961 a series of meetings ... were held to investigate the possibility of Mr Stern and Mr Milne becoming the headmaster and second master respectively of the St Martin's project. At a meeting early in December, however, it was mutually agreed that Mr Stern should carry on with a project of his own as he could not accept the delays inherent in the connection with the St Martin's Society."⁴⁸ Elaborating further, he wrote: "... there has been some hesitancy over the acceptance of the link with the Anglican Church such as that maintained by other Church schools in Southern Africa."⁴⁹

"Hesitancy" was, I think, putting it mildly: Michael had made clear in his letter to Bishop Stradling how he felt about the lack of support for (even, perhaps, the betrayal of) the ideals on which he and Bishop Reeves had started St Martin's. He was not about to agree to head a new school over which the Church would exercise ultimate control. Also, "The

appointment of the Board of Governors as envisaged by the society is not acceptable to Mr Stern ..."⁵⁰

So, "[i]t seemed reasonable in view of Mr Stern's earnest desire to establish his school that the Society should stand down if he felt it was hampering his progress. As the position now stands, the Society will not proceed immediately with its project but will take such steps as it is able to do when opportunities arise ..."⁵¹

The opportunities never did arise and a letter to the Resident Commissioner dated 7 May 1962 in fact effectively ended the project. It stated that "the Society has, for the time being, postponed its own plans in relation to the Swaziland project."⁵²

Bishop Reeves was succeeded by Bishop Leslie Stradling, who rapidly made it clear that his approach would be decidedly different from that of his predecessor. The Sunday Times reported on the first Diocesan Synod at which the new Bishop presided, headlining Stradling's statement that he was obliged to accept apartheid and intended to play a less active role in politics than Reeves. He explained to the newspaper: "I thought it would be understood that I am opposed to Apartheid. I accept it only in the sense that it is inevitable for me to do so. It is the law of the country and I have to accept it even if I do not support it." Two days later, the Synod passed a resolution which could hardly have been more explicit: "The policy of racial separation is contrary to the Scriptures and its practical implementation is morally wrong." In addition, the liberal Rand Daily Mail castigated the Bishop: "... the truth is that South African politics today pose a major moral issue and people are entitled to look to their religious leaders for guidance." The new Bishop's attitude during the two culminating crises which were to come was the catalyst for the departure from St Martin's of Michael Stern, Gordon Milne, Jim and Jean Richardson, John Tibbs and Deon Glover. Like Huddleston and Reeves, Bishop Stradling played a crucial

role in getting Waterford started, albeit from a considerably different standpoint.

It was very hot in Johannesburg in late October and early November 1960 – a heat wave that gave rise to St Martin's first major crisis. The story is best told in Michael's own words, in a round-robin letter to family, friends and supporters after what came to be known as "The Swimming Bath Incident".

A week ago during the heatwave I gave permission to our domestics to use the school swimming pool for half an hour in the evening, under close supervision by a member of staff and of course at a time when our own schoolboys were in prep. I anticipated disapproval in some quarters but not a national outburst. To me it was not a political gesture but an ordinary act of kindness. The same evening two prefects came to protest (very politely) and I told them I would think about it. The following morning the school was humming, and, after checking that the staff supported me 100%, I called the whole school together and explained very simply and gently that we appreciated their point of view but that we also felt

very strongly that we were doing something right and decent and that I could not see how I could go back on it. Thereafter many boys told me that they agreed, but there was clearly a big body against, though nobody else came to me.

I am confident it would have remained a domestic issue with the boys soon accepting the inevitable cranky liberalism of their staff, for relations are really good: but, first a Governing Council member, who is also a parent, went off the deep end and threatened to call the Special Branch and then an anonymous parent or two went straight to the chief Nationalist newspaper, *Die Transvaler*. Fat then truly in the fire. Headlines first in that paper, then in *Die Vaderland*, and finally in Cape Town's *Die Burger*, accusing me of forcing White boys to swim in water that had been polluted by Blacks, of challenging the whole system of apartheid and threatening the very government itself! That the Whites and Blacks were swimming at totally different times, that the water was chlorinated, that the entire contents went through the filter plant one and a half times between the last domestic leaving and the first St Martin's boy entering – all this was overlooked. Obviously a national crisis!

Fortunately I had already been in touch with the Governing Council of the school, and the Chairman ... though alarmed, had agreed to let things develop. The staff and myself were convinced we could not withdraw, the more so because it had now

been made an issue of common sense versus prejudice. As the situation deteriorated so the Council became justifiably more alarmed, and on Sunday we had a four-hour meeting, at the beginning of which only four of the 14 Council members enthusiastically supported me. All the others agreed that I had done the right, decent, Christian thing, but (and this one so often hears in South Africa from so many nice people) it was "inexpedient", the time was not right, the right action at the wrong time, etc. But when I explained that I had obtained legal and medical opinion, that even the local provincial school inspector had privately supported me, that the chairman of the parents committee was 100% behind me, and finally that the staff felt that this had now become a very important point of principle, on which they felt just as strongly as anyone else, feeling gradually spread that I had to be backed, and when the Chairman finally, suggested we might, after supporting me, investigate the possibility of building a small bath specially for the domestics, the Council was able unanimously to agree the following communiqué to the press (sighs of relief from me!):

Statement by St Martin's Governing Council: "We fully support the Headmaster in his decision to allow the domestic servants of the school to use the school swimming bath at certain restricted times on certain days under supervision, when the bath is not in use by the boys. We are satisfied that there is no medical or

legal reason against this and that it is a right and Christian decision. We are, however investigating the possibility of building a swimming bath for the domestic staff.”

In view of fears and feelings this was a courageous statement from a South African-born Council and I was deeply grateful for the backing. It appeared in all the chief papers the following day and there was a further storm of criticism from the Afrikaans ones, though their tone was fairer and more moderate. Even they began to see that there might after all have been no serious political undertones. That is what I hope will be the general attitude, because obviously we don't want to fight a major battle (which we should lose) on such a minor issue, though its very insignificance is deceptive and the strength of feeling it has aroused shows how close it goes to the basic South African malaise.

From the point of view of St Martin's, now that there no longer seems any fear of immediate closure (!), I can see the possible advantages. We have, I think, won a moral victory: we have shown clearly that an Anglican Church school does stand for certain dangerously decent things, which people who send their sons must accept with the school or else go somewhere else to get a different kind of education for their boys; but it has revealed a firm unity on the staff on these matters and an encouraging (if reluctant) backing by the Council; and ... I am sure the boys will quickly accept what they can't prevent and

so be better fitted to cope with the new South Africa when it comes.⁵³

So Michael and his close staff had won this time, but narrowly so, and the experience raised once again the question of whether it was right for them to continue trying to exercise a liberalising influence in this setting. The backing from Council had been reluctant and almost coerced by circumstance, the majority of parents and pupils, although they acquiesced this time, were clearly not happy with even so mild an initiative, and, above all, from the side of the official Anglican Church, there had been no indication of approval, much less whole-hearted support for what had become, for Michael and the staff, an issue of Christian principle. Shortly afterwards, Michael wrote home: “I repeat that I think St Martin's has survived this extraordinary explosion ... but if there is no place for the kind of things we are trying to do in the new Republic then we shall just have to move in a body to some other part of Africa where there is perhaps bigger demand (though nowhere is there a greater need than here) for the particular stamp of liberal Christian education that we have to offer.”⁵⁴

The idea of moving to “some other part of Africa” had undoubtedly been influenced by the very successful work camps for St Martin's boys originated and organised by John Tibbs. He later wrote:

“I had the idea that that, if we could not have much meaningful contact with non-white schools in South Africa, boys should visit a country where apartheid did not exist and where white boys and men could

do manual work to help black people. Parents gave their consent and supported the idea with finance. Several staff cars with about 15 boys pitched their tents at the Usuthu Mission in the Malkerns Valley in Swaziland and spent 10 days decorating classrooms and dormitories. With Michael Stern on board you can imagine there was not much slacking. However, trips to the Mbabane, the cuddle puddle and some football games with local boys were enjoyed. That was Operation Rainbow. Another year we helped to build a swimming pool – a big job with much heavy wheeling of wheel barrows with concrete – Operation Superman. The third year we did minor building works at St Michael's High School for Girls run by the Sisters of the Order of the Holy Paraclete at Manzini, another church school – Operation Goodwill. Then, in the fourth year we went to St Pauls' Mission at Molepolole not far from Gaborone. We made bricks for Canon Douglas Gordon who was extending St Paul's Church there. These camps were good fun and not over strictly organised and I think that Michael certainly got the idea that to build a school in one of the protectorates would be a great challenge. Jim Richardson accompanied us on these camps and organised the work appropriately. He loved it, having been a church builder in Zululand at St Augustine's before coming to St Martin's.⁵⁵

Deon Glover told the story of how he and Michael were having a meal at the George Hotel in Manzini during one of the work camps

– it must have been in 1961 – when an unknown man came up to them and, without preamble, said, “Well, Stern, when are you going to get this school of yours started? Time's running out.” Deon was mystified, as he knew nothing of the St Martin's Society Project, which was then seemingly dormant, if not close to extinction. As Barry Stocken said, “Michael and Gordon played their cards very close to their chests when it came to the initial moves to start a school in Swaziland.”

It turned out that this cryptic comment came from Oliver Tetley, who was shortly to play a significant role in preparing the ground for Waterford's establishment. Tetley knew everyone of consequence in Swaziland. He had followed with great interest the St Martin's Society's initiative and was frustrated by its lack of progress.

While St Peter's School closed at the end of 1956, the adjacent St Peter's College, completed in 1915, continued to prepare black candidates for the Anglican ministry. It was an obvious place to hold the annual diocesan clergy retreat scheduled for January 1962. However, there wasn't enough space for all the clergymen expected and St Martin's was asked to accommodate the overflow. Michael, understandably cautious after the furore of the swimming bath business, took the request to the school's Governing Council to obtain its agreement. He ended this request as follows: “One of the objects of the Retreat is to express the unity of the church, so African and European clergy will be mixing freely, and the overflow will presumably include some of each.

I hope very much that the Council will see its way to granting this permission.”⁵⁶

The Council apparently had some reservations, but the Chairman supported the idea.

However, Michael and the staff were then stunned by the discovery that none of the black clergy were to sleep in the St Martin’s dormitories after all, and that it had never been the Bishop’s intention that any should. They were shocked and angry, and felt that the principles they and the school stood for had been betrayed. Michael’s response was a four page letter to the Bishop on 20 December which began: “It is only right, I think, that I should try to explain to you why the staff & I at St Martin’s feel so disappointed & let down by the Council and yourself over this matter of the Clergy retreat.”⁵⁷ The letter which follows is heartfelt, angry, bitter and deeply sad. And also uncompromisingly definite: “... we have had to accept a condition which goes flat against our consciences ... We want to have nothing to do with that kind of compromise, & by forcing it on us you have left us no easy way of dissociating ourselves from the whole manoeuvre except by resigning. What else can we do?”

LETTER TO BISHOP, DECEMBER 20, 1961

In fairness, we should also look at the Bishop’s point of view, as expressed in a letter some years later: “It seemed right to me that all the Johannesburg clergy, Black and White, should be in the Retreat together, sharing the same Church and the same dining room. I did not think that a furore about Black boys in White

water had so far advanced the Kingdom of God that I now wanted another furore about Black men in white sheets. I thought I was making one step forward and the next step would come later (as it did when we transferred the Retreats to St Benedicts).”⁵⁸

There can be no doubt about the depth and sincerity of Michael’s feelings as expressed in his letter and the strength of his conviction that he could not continue at St Martin’s after what had happened. But perhaps, as he and his close staff knew very clearly, it also came as a release and a justification for doing what they really wanted to do – to start a new school in Swaziland where they would be free to act according to conscience. “Finding we could be neither liberal nor even Christian (racially speaking) in the Republic of South Africa,” Michael wrote much later in his obituary for Gordon Milne, “we moved across the border in 1962/63 to start a new school in Swaziland, the first in that part of the world completely open to all races.”⁵⁹

LETTERS TO PARENTS REGARDING RESIGNATION OF GORDON MILNE AND MICHAEL STERN, 11 JANUARY 1962

I’ll leave the St Martin’s story with a final word from Peter Klatzow. “Michael Stern’s dream, of what secondary education in Africa could be, reached fuller realisation in Waterford, Swaziland, which he founded in 1963 – an experience which I gratefully shared as a 17-year-old Music and Afrikaans teacher. Michael’s dream that St Martin’s could be what Waterford became sheds a revealing light on the (St Martin’s) years of 1958-1962. They were the

anticipation of a more creative and independent educational project.”⁶⁰

Chapter 2 Endnotes

1 It will be apparent that, in this chapter, I am heavily and gratefully reliant on Luise Joubert's excellent history *The Story of St Martin's School*.

2 Quoted in Joubert, p 27. He uses 'European' in the South African sense of that time when it was a euphemistic synonym for 'white'.

3 I refer, throughout, to Michael Stern by his first name and I'm aware that this may seem contrary to the conventions of historical writing. I'm not impartial and cannot pretend to be: like so many others, I was inspired, energised and often infuriated by Michael Stern. He not only influenced, he changed the direction and the quality of our lives. I enjoyed his company, his wit, his warmth, his friendship. So, for me, he is Michael.

4 Headmaster's speech, opening of St Martin's, quoted in Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 28.

5 *Sechaba*, February 1980.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 The Rt. Reverend Ambrose Reeves, *The Sharpeville Massacre: A Watershed in South Africa*, United Nations Unit on Apartheid, 1966.

11 *Rand Daily Mail*, 13 September 1960.

12 As with Michael, it may occasion some surprise that Reeves – "our Bishop" to Africans – should have started another school for white

boys when his diocese already had one in St John's. A possible explanation lies in the fact that he had pastoral oversight for all Anglicans in the diocese, black and white. St John's was, even then, very expensive and the idea of providing a quality Christian education far more cheaply in a relatively poor area would certainly have appealed to so socially conscious a man. Then there was the need to counter, through education, even in a relatively limited way, the racism endemic among white South Africans, including many Anglicans. And, finally, he had school buildings and grounds in a white area – what else was he to do with them?

13 Quoted in Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 29.

14 Ibid., 57.

15 Ibid., 32.

16 Ibid., 57.

17 Ibid., 29

18 Tony Hatton, *Phoenix Rising*, Kamhlaba Publications, 2013, 27.

19 One of these students was Desmond Tutu.

20 Jean Richardson, unpublished memoir.

21 Hardly surprising, then, that, when I last saw him, Jim, cryptic as always, said "Hardest eight years of my life."

22 On Sundays, boarders were given the choice of eating in or taking a packed lunch, which always included one of Jean's meat pies. There were always some left over and these were warmed up and brought to the staffroom for morning tea break on Mondays. Competition

for them among teachers, some of whom would skip breakfast in anticipation, was superficially polite but actually ruthless.

23 Michael Stern, Obituary: Gordon Milne, May 1985.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Although not himself a believer, Gordon regarded religion as a bulwark of society. He never missed a Sunday service at Waterford and joined lustily – and tunefully – in all the hymns.

27 Tony Hatton, *Phoenix Rising*, 17.

28 Ibid., 59.

29 Ibid., 180.

30 John Tibbs. Personal communication.

31 Quoted in Joubert. *The Story of St Martin's School*, 30.

32 John Tibbs: Personal communication.

33 Ibid.

34 William Houston, Eulogy on John Tibbs. 17 February 2017.

35 The first black pupils were admitted in 1981 when it was still technically against the law to do so but the earlier example of a number of Roman Catholic schools had demonstrated that the government was not prepared to enforce the law in such instances.

36 Quoted in Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 37.

37 Ibid., 38.

38 For anyone who thinks this is a bit far-fetched, I am fairly certain that a deciding factor in my being offered a job at Waterford was that, in answer to a question from Michael, I said I could coach 1st XI cricket.

39 Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 57.

40 This may seem odd in the light of what those early staff were paid – £5 a month and their keep – but money was very tight. Barry Stocken, who had also resigned from St Martin's for the same reasons, didn't come to Waterford then either because he had married the previous year and a married man was doubly unaffordable.

41 Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 49.

42 Mr Tugman was the son of a former Headmaster of St Mark's, the Anglican School for white boys in Mbabane which had recently been taken over by the Colonial Government (at very considerable expense, as the Director of Education emphatically pointed out) after running into insurmountable financial and organisational difficulties.

43 Swaziland National Archives, MEMORANDUM ON MEETING HELD IN THE RESIDENT COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE IN MBABANE AT 10AM ON SATURDAY, 3RD SEPTEMBER, 1960, 3.

44 Swaziland National Archives, SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CHURCH SCHOOL IN SWAZILAND AND PROGRESS TO DATE, 1.

45 Swaziland National Archives

46 Joubert, *The Story of St Martin's School*, 54.

47 Swaziland National Archives, Report from A.S.P. Tugman to the Chairman of the St Martin's Society, 1.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 Swaziland National Archives. Letter to Resident Commissioner from the Secretary, St Martin's Society.

53 Michael Stern letter, 25 November 1960.

54 Joubert, The Story of St Martin's School, 54.

55 John Tibbs, personal communication.

56 Joubert, The Story of St Martin's School, 55.

57 Michael Stern, Letter to Bishop of Johannesburg, 20 December 1961.

58 Joubert, The Story of St Martin's School, 56.

59 Michael Stern, Obituary for Gordon Milne.

60 Peter Klatzow, Reminiscences 1958-62, in Joubert, The Story of St Martin's School, 57.