

In 1945 the Whiting family of 25 Kitchener Street transferred their allegiance to St. Barnabas' church in Gorse Hill, because the Vicar of all Saints' wife had left him and a scandal over a divorce shocked the Whitings. St. Barnabas' was rather more 'High Church' than All Saints, but this was tolerated and Tony enthusiastically joined in the choir and became a server. In November he was confirmed and was 'converted' to use an Evangelical phrase, although neither of the priests who prepared him for this milestone in his spiritual development - Father Page Wood the Vicar, nor Father Minchin the Curate who had been trained at Mirfield and inclined toward Orthodox practice and ritual, would have admitted to such a Non Conformist experience.

A branch of the Anglican Young Peoples Association - A.Y.P.A. for short, provided a Youth Club which Tony joined to take part in Socials, Dances and Dramatic productions. Tony played the part of a Lion Tamer eaten by his charge, also a much more serious part in a production of 'The Bishops Candlesticks' based on an incident in Les Misérables by Victor Hugo, in which the escaped Convict Jean Valjean steals the Bishops silver Candlesticks, is caught but is persuaded to return his booty. This experience greatly moved Tony.

On his fourteenth Tony got a job delivering the Evening Advertiser the local newspaper, in Pinehurst, an estate of Council Houses beyond the allotments. This took an hour each evening after school each day, in all winds and weathers. For this he received 22/6, a lordly sum, much of which went for his "keep" but provided for the first time some pocket money. This was supplemented by generous Christmas boxes, particularly from the old people in the Pensioners Bungalows who doted on their paper boy, with golden curls, who always had a cheery smile to brighten their day.

On his paper round young Tony continued to day dream, and imagined himself an Actor. He also felt a call to preach his pacifist and Socialist ideals in terms of the Gospel although he was dubious about the ceremony and ritual of the Anglo-Catholics and thought that too much of the ceremony was merely play acting.

Approaching the Vicar about his call, he was advised to study the Classics at University first, and above all to "get rid of that appalling Wiltshire accent". Not that he was as broad as many Swindonians, but had inherited the country dialect from his parents. In those days of course a B.B.C. accent was required of any one wishing to get on in life.

Tony acted as Sacristan at St. Barnabas' and attended many weddings on Saturday afternoons, because he was there to prepare the bread and wine for Sundays service and to change the altar frontals according to the liturgical Calendar. In order to follow this he constructed a wheel with the various Sundays around the edge indicating the colours of the seasons and in windows giving the Lessons, which he had to find in the big Bible on the Lectern.

At this time a local Priest, a Frenchman who was an Artist, arranged to paint Murals on the walls over the arches in the chancel of the church.

Scaffolding was erected and the walls prepared by sticking canvas on them sealed with white lead paint. Then the outline of the design was drawn on the white surface. To the left facing the Altar the theme was the preaching of the Gospel, starting with Paul and Barnabas and continuing through references to the local church to the Pulpit from which the Gospel was presented. Included among the figures were representations of both Fr Page Wood and Fr. Minchin. On the opposite wall the theme was the presentation of their lives to God by the congregation. Beginning at the Lectern it showed the towns industry, represented by a Railway Engine and workmen offering their lives and labour. On either side of the East window were angels with censers, go betweens, respectively receiving and passing on Gifts to and from God.

For the left hand angel, Tony who was seemingly always in and about the church premises, stood as model for the artist.

A new Music teacher, fresh from College came to the school at this time, his name Norman Blake. He introduced Musical appreciation to the syllabus, and when Tony told his parents that lessons were spent listening to records, they were shocked! in which Tony enthusiastically joined, and under Normans encouragement began to sing solo ballads, particularly "Silent Worship" by Handel. There arose a vacancy for Organist & Choirmaster at St. Barnabas Church and Tony suggested to Norman that he apply. He got the position and Organ recitals and Choral pieces were added to the churches programme. He taught Tony at school and as a choirboy and had a few private music lessons for free. However as the family could not afford to continue despite the recommendations. When the BBC were proposing to broadcast a service of hymns - Sunday half Hour - from Christ Church Old Swindon, The Headlands Choir were included. They were not acknowledged on the credits however, much to everyone's disappointment, the reason given being that they were too good, no one would believe that it was a school choir.

In less than a year Norman Blake had been appointed to a Music Department in Manchester and left the school.

He left a great impression on the school even arranging Orchestral concerts in the Methodist Central Hall with such great conductors as Anatole Fistoulari and Sir Malcolm Sargent. The latter explained how in Mendellsohn's Fingals Cave the music sang sang 'How Lovely the Sea is' He also pointed out the Donkey braying in the Overture to Midsummer Nights Dream. Simple points but opening up a whole new world of Classical music to the students.

Tony stayed up to listen to a performance of The Messiah after Easter on the Radio, but was scolded by his mother for wasting his time "on that rubbish"!

Things were changing, the 1944 Education Act reorganised schools as Secondary Grammar, Secondary Technical, and Secondary Modern Schools, and the examinations were also being changed from the School Certificate to General Certificate of Education Ordinary level. 1947 was something of a watershed, the last University admissions which would be by Matriculation, which required five Credits in the School Certificate. Hence a limit of Eight subjects was set for entrance in the School Cert. Exam. At the end of his third Year a choice of subjects had to be made for the Matriculation examination. Obviously the worst subjects must be dropped, so it was settled that Tony should remain in IV L , but drop History and sit General Science and Advanced General Science which included Chemistry, Physics and Biology instead of these three papers individually. Tony was unable to obey his call to the Ministry because his father was ill and unable to work and with three children the youngest six years old, he could not continue his studies although he had passed the school certificate in six subjects and matriculated .A job had to be found as Tom and Edie were adamant that they could not afford to keep Tony at school for a further two years, and there were no grants for Higher School Certificate courses. Enquiries revealed a position as Laboratory Assistant, leading to sponsored training available at Plessey Ltd. a company working in the new science of Electronics. Having applied for the position Tony required a reference from his headmaster. When approached Mr G.V.Smith the Headmaster protested at having one of his top students leaving school prematurely. He assured his parents that Tony would be sure to get a County , even a State Scholarship at 18, and was in line to be Head Boy.

However they would not be persuaded, so the Headmaster said that Electronics had no future, and contacted his friend the manager of Boots the Chemists to see if he could obtain an apprenticeship there, a career which would allow him later to go to college.