

1 January

BR JOHN DIVERS

19 Sept 1904 - 1 Jan 1985



Born in Glasgow, Scotland, John was one of a long line of Brothers who served the Church in Zimbabwe and South Africa over many years, in his case 54. He came to Rhodesia in 1932, to Kutama, where a boy called Robert Mugabe was just starting school. He arrived by train, walking the last few miles from the station in his black suit and patent leather shoes.

Two years later he moved to Campion House where he ran the practical side of Bishop Chichester's establishment. Then, after five years, he moved to St George's to do the same type of domestic administration for the college. In 1953, he was asked to go to St Aidan's in South Africa, an appointment he found hard to take at first but he soon got into the work which was the same as he had been doing all along. He trained many altar servers and was sacristan. In 1960, he returned to Campion House, this time for good.

Among his tasks was to administer the fuel tank in the yard at Campion. It seems – this writer is unable to verify it – that John, and he was not the only one, saw Fr John Dove's work at Silveira House as pandering to Communists. And when Dove came for some petrol to Campion House, he was refused and told 'get your fuel from China!' Whether John Divers was the speaker or whether the story is even true, the scene has to be considered at least possible in the charged atmosphere of the 1960s and the diversity of loyalties the Jesuits then espoused.

John only left Campion when illness took over and he had to spend a long time in hospital. Although he had enjoyed good health all his life until he was 76, he was overweight and this eventually played against him. Br Francis Waddelove helped him when he was unable to do much for himself and Waddy used to wash and dress him each morning. Waddy would also look in on him several times a day and help him into bed at night.

Those who knew John spoke of his wide circle of friends and his astonishing memory for each of them. He kept an open door and enjoyed entertaining his visitors. He also nurtured his Scottish roots and followed the fortunes of *Celtic*, the football team that was part of his life when he was growing up in Glasgow.

His last five years were dominated by health issues, visits to hospital and operations. He died on the evening of New Year's Day, 1985, and, after the large funeral in the Cathedral, he was buried in Chishawasha.